

THE BOYHOOD OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

J. ROGERS GORE

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**THE BOYHOOD OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN**



The old Stone House where Abe and Austin often stopped on their way to and from the Hodgen Mill

THE BOYHOOD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By
J. ROGERS GORE

FROM THE SPOKEN NARRATIVES OF
AUSTIN GOLLAHER

Illustrated from Photographs



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PREFACE

The following stories about the boy Abraham Lincoln were given to me at intervals, during a period of four or five years, by Austin Gollaher, who spent all his life among the hills of LaRue County, Kentucky, having been born in that county in the year 1806, and having died there on February 22, 1898.

Twenty-five years ago, when I was on *The LaRue County Herald*, a weekly newspaper published at Hodgenville, Kentucky, the town of my birth and upbringing, I found much pleasure in visiting the home of Mr. Gollaher, and drawing from him these tales of the days when he and Lincoln, children of the wilderness, played in the woods, and along Knob Creek, upon the banks of which the boy Austin Gollaher lived when the Lincolns moved from Cave Spring Farm to the Knob Creek hills.

Mr. Gollaher was unschooled, but he pos-

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sessed a keen intellect, and talked interestingly and intelligently of his and Lincoln's childhood in LaRue County. In answer to my questions Mr. Gollaher, little by little, related the narratives quite free from intentional embellishment, I feel sure.

In following these pages, however, the reader is asked to bear in mind that they are leaves from the loving memory of an old man. Abraham Lincoln was, in the recollection of Austin Gollaher, the great event; he was at once playmate and prophet, the day's companion and the man for the ages. Mr. Gollaher saw the boy through the splendor of the man's later years, and while he sought a scrupulous truth to fact—for he ever made probity his watchword—it would have been extraordinary, if not impossible, for his narration of early youth to escape the coloring and the glamour of an imperishable name.

It is undoubtedly true that no one, except the writer, preserved the data from which this series of stories has been written. I did so because they were of great personal in-

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terest to me, and not with any thought at the time of offering them to the public. But since every word about Lincoln has become precious I feel it my duty and my pleasure to give to the world these simple stories, simply told, of the great American's birth, infancy and childhood. They can hardly fail to interest all who love his memory and the many who know but little of these young years in LaRue County.

Mr. Gollaher contended that some of the historians were in error in saying that Thomas Lincoln and his family moved to Indiana in the fall of 1816; he said the Lincolns did not leave Kentucky until a year later, as recorded in Mrs. Gollaher's diary, or as he called it, "Mother's book of things"; that he and his father went with the Lincolns to Middle Creek, a small stream, now the dividing line between Hardin and LaRue Counties, to help with a cow which was a little unruly, and that the journey was begun one bright morning in November, 1817.

Mr. Gollaher associated Lincoln with

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practically all of his memories of pioneer days in the Knob Creek hills. The essentials of the stories are presented as he gave them to me. In retelling them I believed it permissible to go back more than one hundred years into the homes of the pioneers—to visit among them—to be with the Lincolns, the Gollahers, the Hodgens and others—to go with Abe and Austin into the hills, to watch them at their play, to listen to and record their conversations. I have, therefore, dramatized Mr. Gollaher's reminiscences in order to reconstruct with more realism the life of the period, and have allowed Abe and Austin, their friends and neighbors to talk in character and so, naturally, reveal in anecdote and experience the early life of the boy who was to become one of the world's greatest figures.

J. R. G.

Hodgenville, Kentucky.

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**THE BOYHOOD OF
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THE BOYHOOD OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHAPTER I

AUSTIN GOLLAHER

“God has been mighty good to me all of these years,” said Mr. Gollaher. “He has given me strength and health, and enough sense to keep me always in the straight and narrow path. In the closing days of my life I am happy; my children are kind to me, and so are my friends and neighbors, and I have lots to be thankful for. Why!” he said seriously, “even now my eyesight is pretty good and I can read my Bible and teach my Sunday-school class.”

For thirty years he was a deacon in a

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little Baptist church which nestled among the hills near his home. There he preached and sang and taught until the weight of time weakened his strong body and forced him to the seclusion of his cabin home.

Mr. Gollaher loved children, and was always pleased when he could visit a schoolhouse and tell some of his favorite stories of “Abe.” He was a good talker and, while his language was not entirely free of grammatical errors, what he said was always sensible and entertaining, and his advice to boys and girls always wholesome. The children returned his love, and would often cling to him, pat his ruddy cheeks and beg him to tell more stories from the Bible, or about his boy friend, “Abe.”

Mr. Gollaher was a stalwart man, and even in his old age was strong and athletic. He was six feet high, broad-shouldered and full of untiring energy. He greeted stranger and friend with a cordial hand-shake and never failed to say: “I

hope your health and the health of your family is good." Particularly did he ask after the health of the people of the neighborhood. If he found illness anywhere he would lose little time in going to the bedside of the afflicted. He knew something of medicine and was glad when he could contribute to the comforts of the suffering.

He was a leader in his community and there was none who disliked him. As he rode his mule through the hills, he would often break into song, the folks along the way joining with him. He used to say he had the biggest band of singers in the world, that even the birds belonged to his choir.

Mr. Gollaher was without personal ambition, but was always eager to assist in any project for the upbuilding of the neighborhood. He was one of the leading spirits and speakers in meetings called for the advancement of pioneer interests. In his younger days he was a fighter, al-

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though not quarrelsome, but after he was twenty-five he settled into peaceful ways and would say, laughingly, that all the fights of his youth could have been avoided. He found more pleasure in felling trees to build cabins than he would have found in laying corner-stones for mansions—more satisfying pleasure in the hunt than he would have found in business or politics.

“I regret that I neglected to well educate myself,” he said. “Abe always tried to get me to learn from the books, but I couldn’t at that time see the need of it. Why, do you know,” he exclaimed, “that had I been well educated I would have been Abe’s law partner? And then, when he became president, he would have appointed me to a judgeship. I learned to read and write and figure pretty well, because Abe begged me to, and I have been glad of it always, because I was able to read of the greatness of my boyhood companion.

"The fact is," continued Mr. Gollaher, "I studied hard for a while, and learned fast, but I didn't keep at it; there were too many attractions in the hills, and I would neglect my studies any time to go hunting. In those days I believed a coon-skin more valuable than a book, and every time my dog barked, I went to the woods. I spent lots of my time in taking coons from the hollow trees. But notwithstanding I whiled away a great many hours loafing with my dog I was better educated than most of the folks in our community; in fact, I was considered such a smart fellow that they put me to teaching school when I was not much more than a youngster. I taught over there where the Wilkins post-office now stands, and was fairly successful, though largely because Mrs. Sarah Hodgen helped me with many little things I did not understand. I taught two terms, and then went back to the woods with my dog and my gun."

While no record of it can be found, it is

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said that at one time Mr. Gollaher was a justice of the peace in LaRue County, and I remember that some of the people in his neighborhood called him "Judge," a title he did not like. "The office is small," he would say, "and the title is big, and the misfit is bad. It reminds me of a small girl diked out in her mother's dress."

On one occasion he was trying two young boys for disturbing public worship. The evidence showed that the culprits had thrown rocks against the church house during service. Mr. Gollaher heard the testimony, and was preparing to render his decision when the mother of one of the boys arose and addressed the court, saying:

"Jedge, ef you'll let the boys go this time we will give them a good whuppin'."

"I can't do that," replied Mr. Gollaher; "I must sentence these youngsters." And he commanded the boys and their mothers to stand up. "The offense is a serious one," he said, "one for which no-

excuse can be offered, except that these boys have not been properly brought up, that they have had no religious training. I therefore sentence the prisoners at the bar, together with their mothers, to six months—”

He paused and both women began to weep, pleading:

“Fer Gawd’s sake don’t do that, Jedge Gollaher!”

“Order in the court!” commanded the judge. “As I was saying, I now sentence the prisoners and their mothers to six months’ attendance at all services in the church during that period. They will occupy the bench directly in front of the pulpit—the Mourners’ Bench—where they will give strict attention to the teaching of the Bible.”

CHAPTER II

LOOKING BACKWARD

WHEN Mr. Gollaher talked of "Abe" he glowed with enthusiasm. He believed implicitly that God gave Lincoln to the world, and watched over him and guided him that He might use him as an instrument to do a great work. He recalled instances in the child life of Lincoln that he believed miraculous—things which could not have occurred had not God's guiding hand been present.

He said Abe was smarter than many of the older people and that he was always doing or saying something that astonished them; that his solemn wit was refreshing to those who understood it, his philosophy and wisdom frequently beyond belief.

"Big," he said, raising his hands above his head, "is not the right word to describe Abe either in mind or body. I'll tell you that boy towered! He was nearly a head taller than I, yet I was three years older; and when it came to being smart he was way yonder ahead of me. God did it; God made him big in body and mind so that he could work hard and never tire—so that he would not give up until the job was finished."

In describing Abe's appearance, Mr. Gollaher said: "His legs were long, his arms were long, his ears were long and his head was long. He was the longest boy in the world. He could walk farther, throw farther and hear farther than any other boy. His eyes were as mild as the moon, but 'pon my word, he could see through these hills here," and he waved his hand toward a chain of hills that almost circled his home.

"But I felt mighty hard toward Abe once upon a time, just for a little while,"

said Mr. Gollaher, a smile playing upon his tobacco-stained lips. "You see, I never heard a word from him until after he was elected president, and I thought he had entirely forgotten me—I thought maybe he thought I was too common for him to remember after he became so great. But I was mistaken, and I now believe Abe thought of me often, and loved me just like he did when we were inseparable playmates upon the hills and in the hollows along Knob Creek.

"One time," he continued, "when Doctor Jesse Rodman, who lived and died at Hodgenville, was in Washington, he saw Abe, and Abe asked all about me, and sent word to me that he would pay my expenses if I would come to Washington to see him. But I didn't go, because I was always afraid to ride on a train of cars. Abe also told Doctor Rodman that shortly after he moved to Indiana he learned how to read and write pretty well; that he wrote two letters to me and gave them to

passers-by coming this way, and asked that they hand them along to others until they should finally reach me. But I never got them. Abe wrote another letter to me from somewhere in Illinois, but I didn't get that either. He told Doctor Rodman that he thought maybe I had died, or that we had all moved away. Why," the old man said seriously, "I'd give this whole farm for those letters right now.

"Abe talked a long time to Doctor Rodman," continued Mr. Gollaher, "and they ate dinner together there in the White House. He asked all about me, and told the doctor about the time I pulled him out of Knob Creek with a fishing pole and saved him from drowning, and also about his billy-goat that stuck a stob in its belly and was killed. He spoke freely of everybody he used to know here, and tears came into his eyes, Doctor Rodman said, as he recalled old Mrs. Sarah Hodgen, the widow of Robert, the owner of the old Hodgen Mill over there at Hodgenville.

She and two of her sons, John and Isaac, were among the best friends Abe ever had in the world. As between the Hodgen boys Abe loved John the most, because John ran the mill, where Abe used to play. John Hodgen thought Abe was a wonderful youngster, and he did lots of nice things for him.

“Abe also asked about my father and mother and many friends who had passed to the other world. He loved my father and mother because they were always good to him. Lots and lots of times mother used to hug both Abe and me to her breast and tell us Bible stories.

“He told Doctor Rodman that he had known few sadder days than the day when he said good-by to me and crossed Middle Creek on his way with his parents to Indiana. He said he was coming over here some of these days to see what was left of us; but he never came. I reckon it would have made him feel bad to have seen how things have changed—to have seen the

graves of the people who were so good to him when he was a boy. Abe was always sad, anyhow, and seemed like he was worried about something; every day of his child and boy life here he seemed that way, and I guess he never outgrew it.

“The story of the birth of Abe, as I heard it from my mother and father, impressed me so much,” said Mr. Gollaher, “that I have dreaded winter ever since. To this day, when I hear cold winds howling my mind goes back to that terrible blizzard on the morning of February 12, 1809, and I see old Mr. Isom Enlow over there near the Cave Spring Farm, stumbling and falling as he plows through the snow—lost in the gray woods, in the blinding storm. And then I see him as he falls over the cliff and struggles up the hill to the Lincoln cabin, where he found Mrs. Lincoln and little Sarah and the baby, Abe, half starved and almost frozen.

CHAPTER III

THE DELIVERANCE

THE winter of 1809 was a severe one. It came a little late, but it came suddenly, with its blighting winds, its ice and snow and low-hanging clouds, and it dealt desolation to field and forest in Kentucky. Those pioneers who lazily lounged in the sunshine of November and December, failing to prepare for the winter, were hopelessly caught in the grip of that mighty blizzard. Cattle and game which did not find shelter were driven to the slaughter-pens of the storm. Even the well-to-do suffered unusual inconveniences and hardships, and there was much sickness and many deaths among the families of the pioneers in the remoter wilds.

The cold came in January and continued through February, with only brief intervals of mild weather. On February 11, 1809, Isom Enlow, a brawny and well-to-do backwoodsman, taking advantage of a likely morning—a lull in the storm—went to visit a neighbor who lived six or seven miles from the Enlow home in the South Fork River section of LaRue County. Early in the afternoon, while Mr. Enlow was yet in the home of his neighbor, the blizzard renewed its attack, continuing bitterly into the night, so that he found it necessary to remain until the morning of the twelfth, as neither man nor beast could withstand the onslaught of the storm. But on the morning he set out afoot, in spite of protests, for he was anxious to quiet the fears of his family who had expected him the day before. He threw his strong body against the wind and trudged along, fighting his way inch by inch over a trail deeply hidden and treacherous.

The storm, after a brief lull, was soon again at its height, the stiff wind blowing the dry snow from the hills, filling the hollows and drifting deep along the fields. Mr. Enlow traveled as one under a mighty load ; his finger-tips frozen, his feet clumsily numb. Lashed by the wind and snow, his eyes were burned and his sight was so dimmed that the big trees were as dancing shadows ; confusion was rioting in his brain, and his strong heart was perilously weak. He must find shelter quickly or perish. His strength was waning rapidly, and he felt that numbness creeping into his body which frequently produces indifference—the indifference that causes one to lie down, smiling, into the arms of death.

But to such a man there was no thought of surrender ; he was a born fighter ; his was the red blood of the frontiersman. It might have been easier, even more pleasant, to have given up the fight and died, but the predominating desire in his heart

was to outwit the storm and to escape the chagrin of defeat. There were friendly cliffs and caves in the neighborhood, but in the storm's wild confusion the half-conscious man could not locate them. Yet he knew that he must find a refuge where he could rest for a few moments or he would lose the battle. At last he crawled under a heavy clump of bushes, roofed with snow and ice.

There, not more than two miles from the home of the friend whose hearthstone he had left an hour before, the pioneer was lost in a neighborhood where, under ordinary conditions, he would have known well every foot of soil, where even the trees would have served him as guide-posts. But there was no fright in the stout heart of Isom Enlow. He peered through the lattice of ice, hoping to find a familiar landmark that would enable him to get his bearings and to resume his journey. But his beclouded eyes saw nothing save the whirling mists. He

rubbed his limbs and beat himself with his big frozen hands to warm his blood—to make ready for another round with the storm—then, pulling himself to his feet, he moved slowly on among the snowclad trees.

Somewhere in that vicinity, Thomas Lincoln had built a cabin upon a hill—a one-room cabin of small logs. Isom Enlow had helped to build it, but now everything was strange to him. He traveled as one in a dense fog. Those great sheets of snow were waving around him and above him. Suddenly, without warning, the stalwart woodsman plunged down a precipice ten feet high and rolled to the snow-covered rocks below. Stunned and bewildered, he clamored to his feet. Then smiled hopefully, for he had fallen over the cliff sheltering the cave-spring at the foot of the steep hill upon which Thomas Lincoln had built his cabin.

With renewed energy, Mr. Enlow scrambled up the hill and pushed his way, unin-

vited, into the cabin. It was miserably desolate and cold. He staggered to the fireplace to find only a few smoldering coals buried in the ashes. There came a faint cry from the corner of the room. Upon a bedstead, made of saplings on which was a tick of straw, lay a woman and a little girl, both too weak from cold and hunger and illness to speak except in the faintest whisperings.

“Oh, I am so ill, and I am afraid my baby is dead,” the woman said in a sobbing whimper. “Won’t you do something for us?” she begged.

Rubbing his eyes and drawing closer to the bed, Mr. Enlow saw the little girl; then he said, “Mrs. Lincoln, this is Isom Enlow; don’t you recognize me? The little girl is alive and will soon be all right.”

“Not the little girl, Mr. Enlow,” answered the faint quivering voice; “I have a baby, a boy, born early this morning. Oh, Mr. Enlow, do something for him,” she pleaded.

The backwoodsman raised the scant covering and there lay an infant, blue from cold, with nothing over it but the light bed-clothes. The little drawn face had upon it the imprint of death, and Mr. Enlow believed he had come too late.

There was not a piece of wood in the cabin, nothing with which to rekindle the fire. Hurriedly he seized an ax and went again into the storm. Beating the snow and ice from limbs and twigs, he broke them into pieces, and then, realizing how precious the moments were, he ran back into the cabin with barely enough kindling to restart the fast dying embers. Out and back he went again and again until the fire finally leaped high and bright in the stick-chimney. Then Mr. Enlow warmed the bed-clothing and wrapped it about the mother and her baby.

He rubbed them gently with his rough hands and soothed Mrs. Lincoln with promises that he would soon make them more comfortable. Continuing to apply

the warm covering, the backwoodsman soon was rewarded with a faint whimper from the infant and a glance of gratitude from the mother. Enlow searched everywhere in the cabin for a morsel of food, but the rough shelves were as bare as the walls. He thought of game in the fields and woods, but everything had sought shelter, and besides it would be sheer folly to go out into the storm again.

But something must be done to get food for the mother and her children. He remembered that in his pocket was a small earthen jar of wild turkey grease which he used to clean the rifles of his gun. In that grease there was nourishment, perhaps; at least he must try it in this dire emergency. Adding some boiling water, Mr. Enlow made what he called soup, and after much persuasion Mrs. Lincoln sipped some of the unpleasant concoction. Then he dipped a string into the melted grease and put one end of it into the mouth of the infant.

Never did physician watch more closely at the bedside of his patient than did Isom Enlow watch for sign of life on that wintry twelfth of February in the year 1809.

The little girl, Sarah Lincoln, sipped the hot greasy water, and insisted in her childish way that her mother drink more of the bitter stuff. When Isom Enlow took the cup from the hand of the little girl and said to Mrs. Lincoln "Drink," she obeyed him mechanically and without thought of herself. Her heart and her hope were in the baby—the boy—that "long, eel-like string of famished flesh," as Austin Gollaher put it, lying there by her side upon the tick of straw. Almost too weak to turn her throbbing head, she watched for further signs of life in the infant and when she saw its purple lips tighten upon the grease-soaked string, happy tears came into her eyes and she said, "The child will live."

The improvement in the baby was as tonic to Mrs. Lincoln; she immediately be-

came brighter and stronger, ready to wage the winning fight—that fight which gave to America its great commoner—the embodiment of the promise that all are created equal and that there shall be neither master nor bond-servant.

But food must be found somewhere; the mother and her children must have nourishment. So Enlow told Mrs. Lincoln he was going to the nearest neighbor's, and that he would return during the day with food and help. Then with a word of cheer, and a wave of the hand, he stooped through the low door of the cabin out into the woods again to face the storm.

CHAPTER IV

GREAT REJOICING

THE storm had abated somewhat, but the skies were still oppressively gray and the wind still strong enough to break the weakest twigs and limbs and scatter them over the fields and through the forests. Isom Enlow stood upon the high hill in front of the cabin, his heavy coat of skins pulled tightly about him. He was undecided. Should he go to Gabriel Kirkpatrick's, two miles to the west, or to the home of Jimmie McDougal, a good two and a half miles to the south, or his own home some four miles to the east? Believing it his duty to let his family know that he had safely escaped the blizzard, he turned his face eastward.

His steps were slow, but there was determination in his heart and soul. His mission was one of love and charity—those two beautiful qualities so deeply rooted in pioneer hearts—and if successful three lives would be saved. If unsuccessful, if he should perish out there in the woods, it would mean—— But at the thought his muscles grew tense, his head lifted, determination blazed on his red rough face, and he trudged forth along the pathless waste.

He had not gone far when his keen ears, deeply hidden beneath the cape-like collar of his fur coat, caught the faint sound of crunching snow. His grip tightened on his rifle and he stood at attention behind a tree, ready to send a bullet through the heart of a deer. But there upon the brow of a near-by hill, picking their way with precision, were a man and a woman and a mule. Their heads were bowed so that they did not see Mr. Enlow, who shouted to attract them.

“Gollaher! Oh, Gollaher!” excitedly called the pioneer. “The Jehovah sent you; I am glad; the Lord has been good to me this day!” And upon his knees, a mile from the Lincoln cabin, there among the snow-drifts, Isom Enlow thanked God for His merciful goodness.

Mrs. Gollaher knew of the expected confinement of Mrs. Lincoln, and notwithstanding the blizzard she and her husband had struggled to reach the little cabin in time. Strapped to the back of the mule were sacks containing corn-meal and bacon, dried apples and peaches, roots of sassafras bushes for tea, butter and eggs and bed-clothing. Following the trail Mr. Enlow had made, the three friends were soon spreading good cheer before a blazing wood fire in Thomas Lincoln’s cabin home.

While Enlow and Gollaher chopped wood in the forest and piled it high within easy reach of the house, Mrs. Gollaher, after Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah were made

comfortable, wrapped the new baby in a blanket of wool and held it close to her warm motherly bosom until a whimper, a faint wail, assured her that all present danger was past. Then there was great rejoicing in the rude little home among the trees, and Isom Enlow, his long hair falling back from his high forehead, lifted his hands to the very roof of the cabin and said, "I thank thee, Lord, for the strength thou gave to me this day." Then to Mrs. Lincoln: "Name the child 'Abraham' after my son, of whom I am very fond."

"I will call him Abraham, for that too was his grandfather's name," she replied, a happy smile of gratitude upon her face.

Note.—There is a tradition that Thomas Lincoln, on the morning of the birth of his son, Abraham, in going across the fields for a mid-wife, met Abraham Enlow (a son of Isom Enlow) riding a horse, and that he (Lincoln) borrowed the horse from young Enlow and rode it to the home of "old Aunt Peggy Walters," who, the tradition further says, ministered to Mrs. Lincoln. But Mr. Gollaher contended that this tradition is in error; that Mr. Lincoln was not at home when Abraham was born, and that he did not reach home until the following day; that three or four days before the birth of the son, he had gone to Elizabethtown, a distance of some fifteen miles from his home, to attend to

an important business matter; that he expected to return the following day, but that neither man nor beast could travel in that fearful blizzard and he was forced to remain away until weather conditions improved; that upon his return the following day he was sorely grieved that his wife had given birth to their son under such distressing circumstances, and that in tears, he knelt by the bed of his wife and begged the forgiveness of his "beautiful Nancy," as he always called her; that in the early afternoon of the following day Mr. Lincoln went to the home of a Mrs. Keith, a mid-wife, riding a horse which he borrowed from Abraham Enlow, who was on his way to the Hodgen Mill with a turn of corn, and that the Enlow boy remained in the Lincoln cabin until Mr. Lincoln returned with the old woman, who relieved Mrs. Gollaher.

Peggy Walters was buried in the old South Ford burying-ground, near Cave Spring or Lincoln Farm. A crude stone on her grave shows that she was born in 1791, therefore she was but eighteen years old when Abraham Lincoln was born. At that age she could hardly have been a mid-wife.

CHAPTER V

A WONDERFUL CHILD

THE stars came out that night, and the pioneers heard the breaking of the crusted snow beneath the feet of stirring animals as they sought food in the valleys and on the hills.

Under these frightful conditions, Abraham Lincoln came into the world. On the winds of a blizzard he came—across the battle-fields of ice and snow, in the roar of the hurricane—frozen and starved. And there beneath a cabin roof, through which his mother saw the morning stars among the shifting clouds, he found life and made of it a wonderful and a beautiful thing.

After weeks of nursing, the mother and

the boy Abraham were carried in the arms of Thomas Lincoln out into the sunshine; and there upon the hillside, above the crystal water of the cave-spring, they breathed deep of the healing spring air and waxed strong. The child grew rapidly, so rapidly that parents and neighbors were astonished. Jimmie McDougal said: “If the Cave Spring Farm could grow Indian corn like it’s growing that baby, Thomas Lincoln would raise such a crop that he wouldn’t know what to do with it.”

Abraham’s face seemed stolid at times, yet there was always an illuminating little twinkle, a forerunner of the humor to come. A wonderful child the pioneers thought him, and none who ever saw him even while he was yet toddling, forgot him because of his size and his attractive strangeness. In his babyhood, as later, he obeyed his father and mother implicitly. And his love for his mother and her “foolishness” over little Abe were items of

neighborhood gossip. Some said that God came down to the world that February morning and went with Isom Enlow to that hill where to-day is enshrined behind polished marble those rough logs which sheltered the great mother when she gave to the world her immortal son.

“Somebody asked why God did not quiet the storm,” said Mr. Gollaher, “but the folks replied by saying, ‘The mysteries of God can not be understood, and we shall not try to understand them.’ It was just the Master’s way of doing things,” he continued. “I reckon He wanted to give to the world an example of what a baby born under such conditions could do for the people. Had Abe been born somewhere in a big fine house, it might have been lots harder for God to have kept selfishness out of his heart.”

CHAPTER VI

THE BINDING TIE

OVER a century ago somebody blazed a trail from the Knob Creek hills to the south fork of Nolynn River, a distance of five miles as the crow flies. The path broadened as it was traveled by the settlers until it became a small road over which a horse could jog along with ease, but it was used mostly as a footpath, branching off here and there like the limbs of a tree, leading here and there to the pioneer homes of that large section of country.

Along this path some time during the summer of 1812, Mrs. Gollaher, the wife of Thomas Gollaher, carefully made her way westward. Tall and attractive, vig-

orous physically and mentally, she was a leader among the women of her day and beloved because of her universal goodness. Under her strong arm Mrs. Gollaher carried a rifle, and from her rawhide belt swung a knife and an ax, while across the young shoulders of her son, Austin, who followed her that summer morning, a rifle rested. They were prepared to defend themselves against the possible attack of some wild animal as they made their way to the Cave Spring Farm, the home of the Lincolns.

It was one of the poorest farms in that whole section of wild country; but from the spring in the cave flowed a pure cold water, and it was this that attracted Thomas Lincoln to the place. When his friends tried to persuade him to move to a community more settled, or to a farm more fertile, he would always answer by saying he could not leave the "good water on the bad farm." Rich soil meant little to Mr. Lincoln; he was not a farmer, and

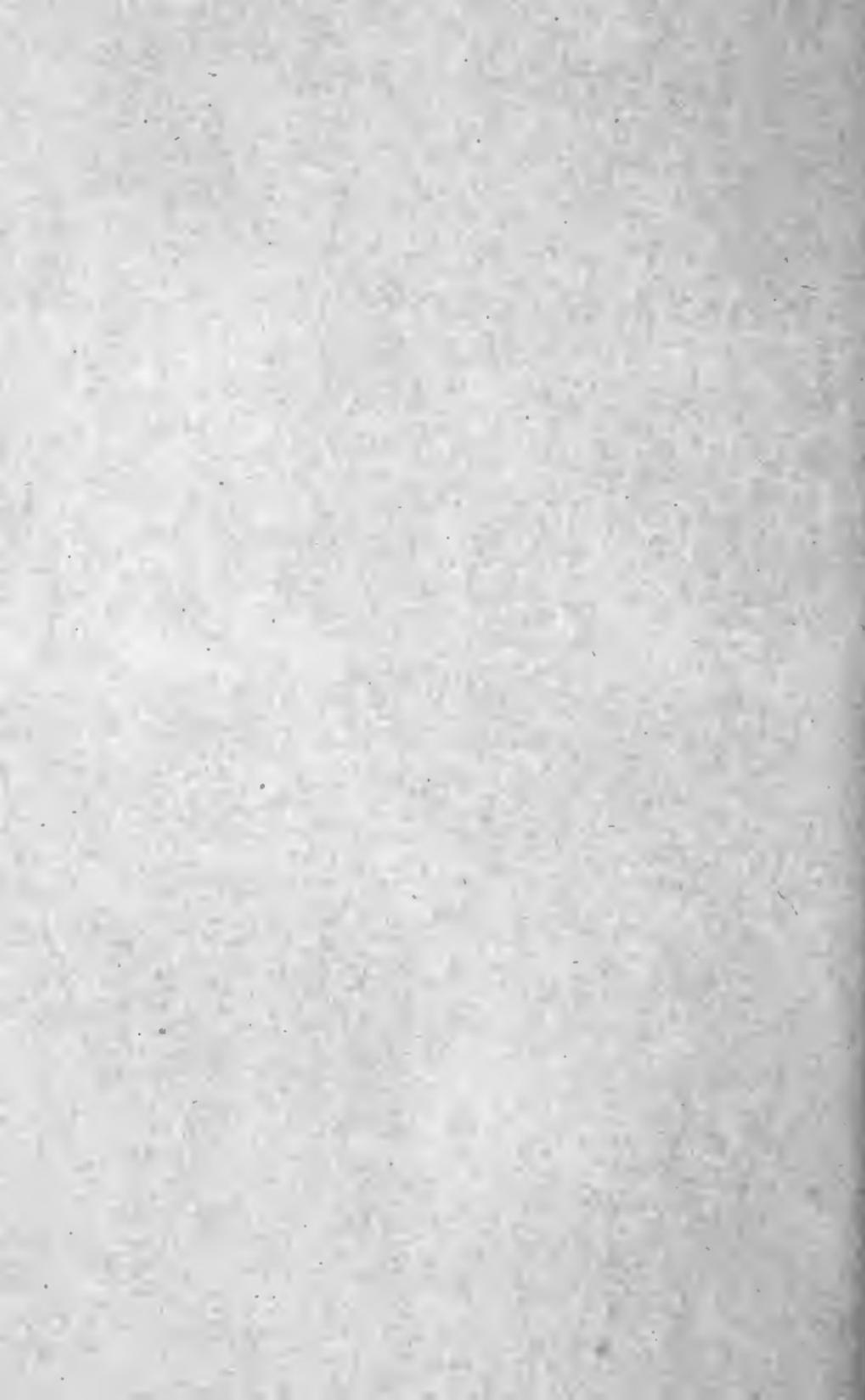
the cultivating and growing of crops were of small interest to him. He loved the damp gray woods; and the bark of the red fox was more pleasing to him than the rustle of growing corn.

“There’s a gobbler——” but before the mother could complete the sentence, Austin’s rifle cracked, and a big fat turkey gobbler rolled over the cliff with a bullet hole through its breast. Mrs. Gollaher did not comment on the marksmanship of her son, since she had seen him do the same thing many times before. That day they had turkey for dinner in the Lincoln cabin, and that day Austin Gollaher, aged six, and Abraham Lincoln, aged three, became friends.

“Austin has brought Abraham a turkey,” said Mrs. Gollaher. “Shall we have it for dinner?” Then back of the cabin they kindled a fire, boiled the water and picked the feathers from the big bird. Mrs. Gollaher gave the wings to Sarah Lincoln, and the claws to Abraham and



Cave Spring on the farm where Lincoln was born



Austin, saying: "Sarah can fan her sweetheart with the wings and Abraham and Austin can use the claws to scratch the devil's eyes out if he ever comes about them."

"I had, of course, seen Abe many times before this visit, both in his home and mine," said Mr. Gollaher, the man, "but there had been something so strange about him that I had paid little attention to him. However, upon this occasion, something new developed in him—something that made me feel different toward him—and I loved him. I wanted to cling to him, to be with him so that I might watch his funny, serious antics, each one having in it something I had never seen the like of before.

"He was different—he was unusually amusing and at the same time pathetic. Why, he even had a way of plucking a wild rose, of picking up a leaf that was different. And he looked at me in such a knowing way that I was always expecting his baby lips to open and tell me a sad or

frightful story. Mrs. Lincoln called him Abraham, but my mother and I called him Abe. Abraham was too much for my boy-tongue. Even after he became president I called him Abe, for I loved it; it carried me back to the days of my childhood among the hills here, and seemed to flood my heart with memories of my most loved playmate. To my mind there is no prettier name than the old-time bob-tailed name of Abe.

"Abe was a good-sized lad at three," continued Mr. Gollaher, "but he would not, or could not, talk. He just looked on while I played around the spring, never smiling or whimpering, or indicating in any way that he wanted to do more than follow where I led; and when I looked back upon that first day of my real acquaintance with Abe Lincoln and think of the Great Leader of Men, following me, it amuses me a great deal."

"I cut two sassafras sticks and trimmed them. Placing a stick between

Abe's long funny legs and straddling another, I tried to interest him in playing horse, but he only stood and looked at me. Then I said to him: 'Hit your horse and make it go.' Then he hit the stick-horse with his switch and followed me around the cliff which sheltered the spring.

"Abe wouldn't play much that afternoon, but he stayed with me until mother and I started home. I wanted to take him along with me, but Mrs. Lincoln laughed and said she couldn't 'spare' him. He had impressed me so deeply that I could not forget him, and, in my child mind, I knew that my friendship for Abe Lincoln was firmly and eternally established. For days I thought of him; I wanted to see him again; I wanted to see if I could get him to talk to me—to tell me one of those strange stories I believed was in his soul, and I annoyed my mother until she again took me to see him. During the next visit, Abe and I became better friends; that is to say, Abe became more friendly with me.

To my surprise, he brought forth the two stick-horses I had left with him and lisped ‘Horse’ as he offered me one.”

After this fashion, as related by Mr. Gollaher, the lad, Austin, and the child, Abe, products of the backwoods, established a loyal friendship, and for a number of years were constant, almost inseparable companions. In the heart of Austin Gollaher, a heart which grew old among his native hills, there was ever a mellow, wonderful love for Abraham Lincoln, and it is said that when he came to die out there among “his rocks and rills” nearly a quarter of a century ago, his withered old lips quivered “Abe” as his soul took its flight.

There were those at his bedside who believed he spoke to Abe on the other side of the River; that the backwoods boys had met again, and that the immortal Lincoln, who conquered greatly and who died a martyr, was happy once more now that his playmate had come to join him.

CHAPTER VII

A NEW HOME

IN none of the pioneers was the spirit of restlessness more active than in Thomas Lincoln. He could not settle down to the work of establishing himself comfortably in the community in which he lived. He intended to improve his home conditions, to build a better and larger house, just as soon as he could find a location to suit his fancy. He was not lazy, neither was he thrifty, but he was a procrastinator to his own and to his family's distress of mind and body. He spent most of his time planning and put little into execution.

He would stay at home closely for a

period and would work industriously; then, without ceremony, and hardly without explanation, he would pick up his flintlock rifle, cram his pockets full of ammunition, grind his ax, sharpen his knife and disappear in the wilderness. He might be gone a day, a week, or a month. His wife, who knew his habits well, did not suffer uneasiness because of his frequently prolonged absences. Indeed, when he left she did not look for him back until she found him pushing his way through the door of their cabin home with a cheery smile for his "beautiful Nancy."

His absence from home when his son was born grieved him very much; he wept when he heard from Mrs. Gollaher the story of his wife's suffering. But Mrs. Gollaher did not let his grief stop her from lecturing him on his domestic carelessness. She could see no excuse for the empty larder, or for the always scant wood-pile, since there were both game and wood in abundance. She insisted that he

make arrangements at once to move his family to a farm on Knob Creek, within hailing distance of her own home. Mr. Lincoln promised to consider the matter, and he did, for four years. Then he moved.

While Mr. Lincoln was, beyond doubt, shiftless and apparently satisfied to live from hand to mouth, he was never accused of deliberate neglect of his family. He seemed anxious enough to try to please them, but the roving spirit had him and he could not resist the temptation to see what folk were doing in "far-away places." He was an expert trapper and hunter and knew more about the woods and the habits of animals than any of his neighbors, but he thought his wife could kill enough game to meet the immediate needs of herself and their little daughter, Sarah, while he was away on his trail-blazing, hunting expeditions.

Mrs. Lincoln used to say laughingly: "Thomas believes the game thinks enough

of me to come around to find out if I am in need of meat."

For a long time after the birth of Abraham, Mr. Lincoln stayed close at home and applied himself during the summer to the cultivation of small plats of ground and during the winter to odd jobs of saw-and-hatchet work for his neighbors. In the winter of 1811-12, he had steady work at the Hodgen Mill, and would frequently carry Abraham a distance of over two miles to spend the day with Mrs. Hodgen, the miller's mother. But in the latter part of the winter, the roving spirit again asserted itself and Mr. Lincoln left home to look at some land in Indiana bordering the Ohio River. On his return, he expressed himself as well pleased and talked of moving to that state. However, to please his wife who was in poor health, he gave up the idea for the time being and seemed contented in the thought that he was humoring his Nancy.

The Lincolns continued to live in the

cabin where Abraham was born until the spring of 1813, when they moved to the farm near that of the Gollahers. Abraham was now more than four years old, but Mrs. Lincoln had not recovered from the illness incident to his birth, and to that of a later son who died when quite young and who was buried in the woods on the banks of the south fork of Nolynn River, a short distance from the Lincoln farm.

All were happier in their new home because they were so near their good friends. Mrs. Lincoln improved in health; Mr. Lincoln applied himself more closely to the farm, and the two children were stronger and better than they had been at Cave Spring. The cabin home was more commodious, and the general surroundings were more inviting.

A daily association immediately sprang up between Abraham Lincoln and Austin Gollaher—an association so remarkable in its pleasing effect upon both boys that

Thomas Gollaher suggested to Thomas Lincoln that they yoke them together like steers. This remark so impressed Abraham that the next day he very seriously asked his father when he and Mr. Gollaher were going to "make that yoke." Notwithstanding Abraham was three years younger than Austin, he was quite as large physically, while his mind was that of a child very much older.

It was in the Knob Creek hills surrounding the homes of the Gollahers and the Lincolns that most of the incidents and adventures here related occurred—incidents that were kept fresh in the memory of Austin Gollaher by the unusual sayings of the boy Lincoln, and later by the towering greatness of the man. When Mr. Lincoln became president, Mr. Gollaher very naturally went to the store-house of memory for anecdotes of his and Lincoln's boyhood in the wilderness, and he found many and told them to his neighbors during a period of many years.

Down at Hodgen Mill the pioneers were one day discussing various topics when Isom Enlow incidentally remarked to Thomas Lincoln that Abe had been named after his son, Abraham Enlow. Mr. Lincoln replied that he was mistaken, that the boy had been named after his Grand-father Lincoln. There was a good-natured argument over the naming of the boy, and the question was finally referred to Mrs. Lincoln for settlement. Very quickly and emphatically she replied: "Yes, Abraham was named after Mr. Enlow's son; I gave him that name myself, for I could never repay Mr. Enlow's kindness; but," she added, "since Mr. Lincoln's father was Abraham, it is all right to let my boy be named after both."

"I'm named after two people," Abraham said to Austin one day, "and I reckon my name is 'Abraham Abraham Lincoln,' so I'm mighty glad, Austin, that you just call me 'Abe.' "

CHAPTER VIII

THE MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

Down on Knob Creek there was a big flat rock thrust out from the side of the cliff as though there wasn't space for it within. Underneath it there was room for a nice play-house, and on top of it ample space to build a child-world. The top was smooth and slightly slanting like the roof of a flat-top house; above it were projecting rocks, covered with running vines. It was an ideal place for boys to meet their imaginary friends and enemies, to build castles in the air, to fight battles with the Indians, or to kill bears and lions, and then, getting away from their bewildering and heroic imaginations, to lie down and listen to the restful trickling of the mountain stream.

On this rock, Abe and Austin fought many victorious battles and dreamed the long thoughts of youth as they looked out over the wonderful world of their imagining. Abe called the rock "the Nice Stone," and it could not have been better named. Its surface was kept polished by the overflowing waters of Knob Creek, and Father Time had made steps to it, so that the top, four or five feet above the level of the ground, could be reached without overhand climbing.

For two years, when the weather allowed, the boys made the Nice Stone their haven, but when they grew older they were kept pretty busy helping make ready against the winter.

"We were more than 'half-hands,'" said Mr. Gollaher, "and much more than worth our 'board and keep.' We could even fell good-sized trees, or at least we thought them good-sized, and by beginning early in the spring and by keeping it up at odd times through the summer

and fall, Abe and I would chop as likely a pile of wood as anybody. We were also handy with the hoe. So, you see," continued Mr. Gollaher, "our daddies found us out and kept us humping most of the time.

"But the Nice Stone was so alluring to Abe and me that we occasionally played off on our fathers and went there for a 'skirmish' when we were expected to be at our task. However, we soon got caught at that trick by father and Mr. Lincoln, who led us by the ears through the woods to the clearing where we were at work and threatened to give us a good tanning if we were ever again guilty of shirking our duties. You see, it was very important in those days for everybody to keep pegging away. It was a big job to clear and clean up land and cultivate crops because our tools and implements were very poor, and to lose time through idleness was considered mighty dishonorable."

It was in the spring—one of those first

bright warm days when every normal boy longs for the green hills and the blossoming valleys. Nature beckoned, and Abe and Austin obeyed; they went to the Nice Stone. Abe was standing upon the rock, looking down into the clean water of Knob Creek. "There's a fish," he said, "in the pool down there," and he pointed his long finger at a floundering black bass that had, in some way, wandered from the main stream. It was a big one and the boys, when they reached the pool, had some trouble in landing it.

Suddenly there came a terrible crash, and the boys were covered with small pieces of stone and many clods of dirt, for an immense rock had dropped from the cliff above squarely down upon the spot where a moment before Abe had stood. Austin, badly frightened, was ready to flee, but Abe stood quiet for a moment and then with a little concern asked: "What do you reckon caused that?"

"I don't know what caused it," an-

swered Austin, still alarmed, "but I do know it didn't miss you very much, and if it had hit you it would have mashed your head off."

"It missed me a heap," Abe quietly said. "It missed me as far as it is from here to the Nice Stone."

"Well, it missed you just about a minute," retorted Austin, "and if you go there to play any more, you'll have to go by yourself, because there are two more rocks hanging up there and one of them might fall any time."

"Another rock might not fall there again as long as we live, Austin, but we won't play around there any more, because if one of them did fall and kill you, I'd feel like I was the cause of it."

"When we told our mothers of the near-accident, we were warned not to visit the rock again, and it was a long time before we returned there," said Mr. Gollaher. "But Abe didn't seem to think anything at all about his miraculous

escape, and when I mentioned it he talked about what a big fish we caught out of the pool. We missed the Nice Stone, and were often tempted to resume our play there, but I was afraid, and since Abe's mother had told him he must not, he could not have been persuaded to disobey her.

"Why, I'll tell you," said the old man, full of sincerity, "God watched over Abe Lincoln; He didn't want him killed, because there were no others like him; and He wanted to use Abe for a big purpose; and He didn't want to go to the trouble to make another like him," continued the excited and emphatic Mr. Gollaher. "Had I been upon the Nice Stone alone, that big boulder would have hit me square upon the head and mashed every bone in my body. Abe's presence saved me. And don't you know, I got it into my child-head that God was watching over me, too, so that I could keep Abe company and amuse him with some of my antics. When I was with Abe I had a sort of safe and se-

cure feeling—a feeling that nothing of any serious consequence could happen to either of us. There was something that caused me to look upon that long-leg boy in wonder. It was no surprise to me when I heard Abe had been elected president. I reckon I saved Abe's life two or three times, but if I hadn't been there to do it, God would have saved him in some other way. I wasn't a bit scared the time they raised such a fuss about Abe being lost, and I told my mother that he'd turn up all right. Mother asked me why I thought so, and I told her that God was looking after Abe. Then mother smiled and said to me: 'Well, we are going out with torches to look for him anyhow, and we are all praying that God will guide us to him.'

"Once I asked Abe if he believed the devil stayed down deep under the ground, and to my surprise he said; 'No sir-ee, I don't; I believe he's in the woods and everywhere; when he's around here I think he spends most of his time in the heart of

old Mr. Evans.’ Abe was always answering me in that curious way, curious for a boy at least.

“I never liked to go to the Hodgen Mill alone,” said the old man, “although I carried a rifle and could shoot straight as any one. I had an uneasy feeling when I was out on that old lonesome road by myself. But Abe, when he was less than six years old, went alone, carried his corn and didn’t seem to mind it. It was a distance, too, of about four miles from here, and the country was pretty rough and gloomy. I felt skittish without Abe, and father made fun of me when I told him it was too dangerous for a boy to make the trip alone, that some day I might meet a big wild animal and that if my aim wasn’t good, it would kill me and then nobody would ever know what became of me. Father just laughed and said I was big enough to kill a bear with my naked hands, adding that he knew what I was up to, that I just wanted ‘Abe Lincoln to go with me.’”

"Abe wouldn't learn to shoot a gun, and didn't carry one," Mr. Gollaher said, biting off another chew of his "store tobacco." "But his father made him carry a knife and a small ax. (My grandfather, who was a blacksmith, made the ax for him.) Well, it was finally arranged so that Abe and I could make most of the trips to the mill together, but occasionally something would happen, either with Abe's family or mine, that would make it necessary for us to go alone; and don't you know I actually refused to go without Abe; I was mortally afraid, and two or three times father found it necessary to start me with a hickory. But if Abe was ever afraid to go without me, he never mentioned it.

"I never often saw Abe excited," he continued, "but on one occasion when a small wildcat attacked his dog, 'Honey,' and Abe thought he was going to be killed, he got so nervous he danced a jig and yelled to me to shoot the cat, but before I

could shoot, Honey, minus a little hair, went one way and the cat another. Then Abe, taking a big long breath, said: ‘I was scared, Austin, because it looked like that wildcat was going to skin Honey alive.’ ”

Mr. Gollaher gazed across the little field in front of his home to the hills, and half to himself he asked:

“Why was that pool made in the edge of Knob Creek? Why did the fish get into the pool, and why did it flounder two minutes before that stone fell?” And then he answered his own questions, saying: “Just God’s mysterious way of doing things.”

CHAPTER IX

NEW FRIENDS

THE narrow road, which, like a huge rusty snake, wound its way through the Knob Creek hills to Hodgen's Mill, was bordered by hundreds of great forest trees, "three-footers" the natives called them. It was the custom to cut away the bark for a space possibly a foot square, smooth it down carefully and then upon the bright surface inscribe notes, bits of doggerel or directions to the passing stranger. This method of woodland correspondence became so popular that many romantic settlers carried with them a willow twig brush and a small container filled with pokeberry ink. It was like the gay days in the Forest of Arden when Orlando wrote his love-notes to Rosalind.

Thomas Gollaher had just trimmed a smooth spot upon the trunk of a big tree and was preparing to "indite" a letter—a simple, three or four word letter, in which he would find amusement, but others would perhaps see nothing except a senseless scrawling—when a short distance ahead of him he saw young Lincoln trudging along with a good-sized dog under one arm and a small sack of meal upon the opposite shoulder. It was a heavy load, very much too heavy for the lad, big as he was, and he carelessly threw the sack of meal down under a clump of bushes, then very gently placed the dog on the ground beside it. The day was hot, and under his burden Abe was steaming and perspiring. He fanned himself with a bunch of leaves and dropped down beside the dog. The curious Mr. Gollaher slipped noiselessly from behind one big tree to another, Indian-fashion, until he was within a few feet of Abe. Then he watched and listened.

Abe was holding the dog close to his breast, calling it “Honey” and talking to it most sympathetically. Again he placed it on the ground by the bag of meal, and went to a small spring across the road and brought back a cap full of water which he gave the dog to drink. Then he took a hunting knife from his belt and quickly whittled out two rude splints. Next he peeled the bark from some pawpaw bushes, placed a splint on each side of the dog’s right foreleg and wrapped it with the soft pliable bark. The wounded dog licked Abe’s hands and face, and whined its thanks into his ear. The new friends loved each other—the boy because it was natural for him, out of his sympathetic heart, to love that which suffered, and the dog out of gratitude for the great kindness shown him.

“By holy, he’s fixed that dog’s broken leg!” exclaimed the astonished Gollaher in a voice that Abe overheard. Realizing that he had disclosed his presence he



One of the old trails over which Abe and Austin carried their corn to Hodgen's Mill



stepped out from his listening-post and asked if he could be of any assistance to "Doctor Abraham."

Without displaying the slightest surprise over the sudden interruption, the boy quietly asked Mr. Gollaher for a piece of rawhide, and the two finished the job by wrapping tightly the bark and the splints.

"Give me another piece of rawhide, please, Mr. Gollaher, to tie around the dog's neck, so I can fasten him to a stob."

"All right, Abe; here it is, but don't you know the sun is about down and you are at least a mile from home? Your pappy'll tan your hide when you get there. Now, you'd better move along; I'm going the other way, just as soon as I write my letter." And he stepped over to the tree which he had prepared for his inscription.

"I'll tell you what I'll write," said Mr. Gollaher with a humorous twinkle in his eye. "I'll just say 'Abe-ee got a dog.' "

"Now, please, Mr. Gollaher, don't tell father about the dog," begged Abe, "for he might try to kill it to put it out of its misery; and I want it to get well, so Austin and I can play with it."

Mr. Gollaher promised, and Abe turned homeward, his sack of meal over his shoulder, the dog hopping on three legs at his side. Then upon the tree, the woodsman wrote, in ragged letters:

"ABE L. GOT A DORG."

Abe trudged along stopping now and then to pat the dog on the head, and to assure it that the broken leg would soon be well. When in hailing distance of his home he paused to reconnoiter and to plan. He must do something with the dog; he must hide it temporarily, because there was grave danger that his father would kill it. Dropping his bag of meal, he hurriedly tied the crippled dog beneath a sheltering bush and told it to lie quiet until he got back. On reaching home he

found his mother worried, as usual, because of his late arrival, but his explanation satisfied her and she forgave him. Indeed, his excuses were usually well-founded. The old mill was slow, and each customer had to await his turn. The miller, John Hodgen, loved Abe devotedly, but he would not violate his rule of "first come first served," and Abe's turn usually came late.

He never walked briskly; his was a long stride but slow careful step, and he seldom hurried, except upon those occasions when his father followed with a switch. Then, too, he saw many things of interest along the wooded paths. The squirrel, the rabbit, the opossum, and, indeed, every wild creature of the woods challenged him on his journeys to and from the mill. He had been known to lose an hour's time chasing a snake through the weeds to rescue a frog from the reptile's greedy mouth; and the young birds along the way that happened to fall from their nests

found no more eager samaritan than young Abe. He never failed to climb the tree and deliver the baby bird safely to its mother. There were so many attractions in the woods, so many things needing Abe's immediate attention, that it wasn't surprising he sometimes forgot the corn-meal.

The miller frequently reprimanded Abe for his tardiness, and often when it was too late for the boy to go home alone would saddle "Old Fanny," his mare, and deliver him and his bag of meal to his home on Knob Creek. And Mr. Hodgen, being fond of Abe, usually stretched the truth a bit and informed Thomas Lincoln that there were many early customers and that the boy's turn did not come until late for that reason.

"Down there by the tall sycamore tree, I have a dog tied to a sapling, and its leg is broken," Abe whispered to his mother, Thomas having fallen asleep in the chimney corner. "Please go with me to get

him, and help me put him in the pen where the pigs used to stay; there's a roof over it and he won't get wet when it rains."

In answer to his mother's inquiries he then told the story of how he found the crippled dog at the foot of a precipice, and how he had "fixed" its broken leg. "Now," he added, "father won't like the dog, but you will like him, and so will Sarah, and I want you to beg father not to kill him or give him away."

Mrs. Lincoln, always indulgent of Abraham, consented, and the two went out into the night to find the dog and bring him in to his new home—the pig pen. Abe carried the wounded animal in his arms, patting him and calling him "Honey," as they made their way back to the house.

"You love the dog so much," said his mother, when Abraham asked her what to name him, "I reckon you'd better call him 'Honey'; that was what you called him last night when you untied him from the sapling."

So the dog was christened "Honey."

"He'll do lots of good things for me," said Abe to his mother. "You just watch and see."

Mrs. Lincoln smiled, little thinking that Honey was to play an important part in the lives of the Lincolns.

When at last, after much careful nursing, the crude bandage was removed, Abraham was terribly distressed to find the leg miserably twisted, and he was much afraid the dog would never be able to run fast. However, Honey developed speed that was surprising, and as the leg did not pain him or interfere with his activities Abe was happy, for physical appearance did not count much with him then as ever.

"Honey was not good to look upon," said Mr. Gollaher; "his twisted leg reminded me of a curve in the road; but he was the smartest dog in the neighborhood, and made a fitting companion for Abe since both were good and smart and ugly."

CHAPTER X

THE HODGENS

EVERY boy has his hero. John Hodgen, the miller, was young Abe's; and Mrs. Hodgen, the good man's mother, was his heroine. The miller was big, and gentle, kind and courageous; his mother, in Abraham's opinion, was beautiful and wonderfully wise. She was sixty years of age —a white-haired widow—her husband having died in 1810, the year following that of Abe's birth—and was the mother of several children, all of whom had grown to years of discretion before the child Lincoln became such a favorite in the Hodgen home. It was told that on one occasion Abe looked at her snow-white hair for several minutes, and said: "I reckon God made your hair white so it

would be like an angel's robe." Where he got the simile no one ever knew.

Abraham's first knowledge that there is such a country as England, came from Mrs. Hodgen, who told him that her husband, Robert Hodgen, was born there in 1742. She delighted the child with many interesting accounts of that far-away empire, and thrilled him with stories of her husband's perilous voyage across the Atlantic. He also learned from Mrs. Hodgen much about Virginia, as she was born there in 1757, coming through the great dark wilderness to Kentucky with her father, John LaRue, when she was quite young.

At times Abraham apparently enjoyed being with boys, but more often he looked on their rough play with sad disgust. It frequently happened that boys mistook cruelty for heroism, and Abe despised cruelty wherever he found it. Bravado did not thrill him, neither did the bully frighten him.

"One day a lad by the name of Evans pulled off the head of a young bird," said Mr. Gollaher, "and threw it at the feet of Abe. He did it because he knew it would displease Abe, and because he thought it was smart for a boy to be cruel. I never saw such a look as that which came into Abe's face; it changed from the mildness of summer to the harshness of winter, and he looked at the offending boy until the youngster from sheer terror hid his face in his hands. To my surprise, the Evans boy apologized for his depredation, but Abe turned his back upon him and said: 'Let's go, Austin; I don't want even to be close to him.' "

To the boy Lincoln, John Hodgen, the miller, was the biggest man in the world, and when the boys teased him and told him he was trying to be like "Mr. John," he said: "Well, if all of you would try to be like Mr. John there wouldn't be any need for your parents to watch you to try to keep you from doing wrong."

“One bright morning in mid-summer,” said Mr. Gollaher, “Abe, Mr. Hodgen and I were standing on the platform in front of the mill when old Zack Evans rode up with a sack of corn. His horse was blind, and when he shied away from the platform Evans gave him a terrific kick in the stomach. The poor beast groaned. Abe looked at Mr. Hodgen and Mr. Hodgen looked at Abe.

“‘Zack, why did you kick that horse?’ asked Mr. Hodgen angrily; ‘the blind old animal was good enough to bring you and your corn to mill, and doesn’t deserve such treatment.’

“For answer Evans kicked the horse again.

“Quicker than a flash, John Hodgen grabbed the man by the collar and pinned him against the platform; then he raised him up and looked into his face and said; ‘Take your corn away from here, and don’t you come around me any more; if you ever kick that old horse again in my

presence I'll give you a thrashing you will remember as long as you live.'

"At first I thought the frightened man was going to run away, but he soon regained his senses, and was loud in his apologies. He begged Mr. Hodgen to grind the corn, which, of course, he did.

"It was unusual for Abe to show elation over anything and especially over quarrels or fights, but he seemed to get pleasure out of the shaking Mr. Hodgen gave Zack Evans. At the conclusion of the apology Abe said rather spiritedly: 'Your boy pulled off the head of a live bird and threw it at my feet the other day and he asked me to forgive him just like you did Mr. Hodgen. Your boy oughn't to do any more birds that way and you oughn't to kick your horse any more.' "

The mill was on a cliff, overlooking Nolynn River, while the home of the Hodgens rested in a pretty grove a quarter of a mile to the west on the river bank. It was perhaps the most commodious house

in that region and was looked upon admiringly by every pioneer who saw it. It was here that Abraham Lincoln gained his thirst for knowledge and learned many of the simpler lessons of life. So ardent was the love of John Hodgen and his mother for the boy that they several times begged Mrs. Lincoln to give him to them, but she always said no to their pleadings. For days at a time during the winter Abraham would visit them, but after a while he would get homesick for his mother and sister and Austin, and then John Hodgen and his mother would bundle him up and send him trudging back across the hills to Knob Creek.

CHAPTER XI

THIRST FOR LEARNING

ABRAHAM called John Hodgen "Mr. John," and Mrs. Hodgen "Missus Sarah," but he always called Isaac Hodgen "Mr. Hodgen," because he could not pronounce Isaac clearly. Then, too, Mr. John and Missus Sarah were his closest friends and he doubtless felt it was a little more endearing to use their given names.

From the lips of John Hodgen and his mother, the boy learned something of the wonders of the world, of far-off lands and cities rich and splendid. They told him the story of Columbus and stirred his latent love of country with the proud name of Washington. Those stories Abe

greedily devoured, but he didn't like tales of Indian massacres, and when John Hodgen teasingly began one of them the boy begged for more of George Washington or Robinson Crusoe, whose patience in teaching "Friday" impressed him greatly.

"Abe said to me one day," related Mr. Gollaher, laughingly, "that the reason he liked Mr. Crusoe was because he believed the adventurer was just like Mr. John, that had Mr. John been out there on that island, he would have done everything as **Mr. Crusoe did it.**"

From his mother and from Mrs. Hodgen Abraham learned his A B C's. Indeed, these two women created in him the first thirst for knowledge—that thirst which grew as the boy grew, until it became his first concern, his one great passion. With pencils of soapstone, upon smooth boards scorched black over the backlog fire, Mrs. Hodgen spelled and figured and explained, never losing pa-

tience in her effort to teach the boy—to give him the fundamental three R's. Abe was proud of his progress and worked faithfully; indeed, he became so studious that his father threatened to forbid further "education," but Mrs. Hodgen shamed him out of this and assured him that one day he would be exceedingly proud of his son, Abraham. However, she did not succeed in convincing Mr. Lincoln that education was necessary; in fact, he told her it was a waste of time, and "a piece of foolishness" to interest a boy as big and strong as Abraham in "book-learning," that such things should be reserved for girls, and for boys who were small and sickly.

Each week Mrs. Hodgen would write on the burnt board one of the Ten Commandments, and when Abraham came to the mill with corn she would read and reread it to him until it was pretty well impressed upon his fresh young mind. Then on his next visit to the mill she would read

him a new Commandment and have him repeat the one of the previous week.

Mrs. Hodgen used kindergarten methods of her own devising long before kindergartens were dreamed of. Her illustrations were amusing and impressive. For example: She would drive three sticks or stobs into the ground; to one she would tie a cat, to another a hen, and to the third Abraham's dog, and then in the ground beside each she would write its name: c-a-t, h-e-n, d-o-g. Of course the boy was tremendously interested; he would walk from one stob to another, stopping and thinking; then back again to the beginning. Finally he cried out that he could "do them," and turning his back he went down on his hands and knees and wrote "cat," "hen" and "dog" on that smoothed spot in the back yard of the Hodgen home where he and Austin played marbles.

On his way home that afternoon Abe printed "cat," "hen" and "dog" on ev-

ery inviting spot that he passed; the fair face of nature was splotched and blotted, and Abraham was late to supper. The truthful explanation he gave his father was entirely unsatisfactory, and a whipping followed. Thomas Lincoln was displeased and again threatened to forbid any more of that foolishness which Mrs. Hodgen was putting into the boy's head. But Mrs. Lincoln interceded; and when she believed it necessary to be positive with her husband she could be, so Mr. Gollaher asserted, finally and completely positive. Thomas Lincoln seriously believed that Abraham's thirst for book learning would be his ultimate ruin and naturally did not feel very kindly toward Mrs. Hodgen.

Abraham told Austin about the incident, and added that he was very sorry his father didn't seem to want a boy to learn anything out of books, and that "if father had learned a little about reading and writing when he was a child he might not

have wanted to kill as many foxes and coons and other things in the woods."

Mr. Lincoln had practically no education. When he made an occasional sale of pelts to a huckster he had to get his wife to "figure up the amount due him" and then count the money. But he was unalterably opposed to education, saying that people who could read were lazy, and neglectful of their duties in the fields and woods.

But Abraham did not let his father's reprimand or his opposition to book learning keep him from Missus Sarah's open-air school or the room up-stairs that she had set apart exclusively for her pupil's use.

In his spelling lessons the word which gave to him the most trouble was "turkey." He would sometimes spell it "tirkee," sometimes "terkee," or, getting closer to it, "turkie." Finally Missus Sarah succeeded in getting him straightened out on the letter "u" by telling him

to remember: "When I tell YOU to go to the spring for water YOU must go. Now," she said, "U-U-U, YOU must remember." He then learned to spell "key" and so finished his education as far as "turkey" was concerned. When he told Austin that he knew how to spell "turkey" the latter replied: "Well, I'd lots rather know how to shoot one; the spelling won't do you any good, but if you'd learn to shoot straight you'd kill one every now and then. What good'll it do you to spell 'em if you can't get 'em to eat?" he asked very seriously.

Until the end of his long life Mr. Gollaher repeated Lincoln's answer to that question at every opportunity, sometimes laughingly and sometimes soberly, but always with earnestness.

"It's this way, Austin," replied Abe, "eating is good and we have to eat to live, but if you are going to keep it on your mind you'd just as well have been born a pig, then you could have rooted around

all day long for something to chew up and swallow. We ought to put something in our heads as well as in our bellies. Everything depends on our heads—on the things we get out of books. The more we put into our heads, the easier we will get things to put into our bellies. Of course, we've got to kill things to eat, but if I had to kill anything I could kill it with a rock; I don't want to learn how to shoot; father can do the shooting for me. He doesn't mind killing things and I do. Yes, sir-ee; I'd rather know how to spell turkey than be able to shoot its head off with a gun."

"Although Abe pleaded with me, I could not be persuaded to take an interest in Mrs. Hodgen's free school," said Mr. Gollaher, "and it always pleased me when I heard Mr. Lincoln making fun of education. I preferred to become a good hunter and trapper—a woodsman with a mighty swinging ax—and I devoted my time to training myself along those lines."

When he became a very old man he said

it had been one of the deepest regrets of his life that he had not gone with Abe to Missus Sarah's school, but he added, with a smile, "I was a better wood-chopper, a better hunter and a better trapper than Abe, even if he was a better president."

Arithmetic was too prosy for Abraham. He thought it a waste of time to try to get sense out of figures, and Mrs. Hodgen had no end of trouble in persuading him that it was worth while to know that two times two are four. He contended that he wanted to learn how to read so that he could find out about Columbus and Washington, and what had gone on in the world; he could not see that figures would help him to do that. He told Austin that he did not expect to have much to do with things that would require "adding to and taking from." But Mrs. Hodgen told him that some day he would own a cow that he might want to sell. "Then," she said, "you couldn't even count the money, and the man to whom you sold the cow

might cheat you.” This seemed to impress him and he applied himself a little more interestedly in an effort to unravel some of the simple mysteries of figures.

“Abe very quickly learned how to pronounce a great many small words,” said Mr. Gollaher, “but figures seemed to worry him a lot. After he was able to say arithmetic correctly, he took more interest in addition and subtraction. He certainly made a mighty slow start in ‘sums’ and a mighty fast start in everything else in the way of learning. I reckon his forwardness in reading and writing made him seem more backward in arithmetic than he really was. Before he left Kentucky,” continued Mr. Gollaher, “he claimed he could count up to one hundred and he said he didn’t believe he’d try to learn anything more about figures. Missus Sarah insisted that he count to two hundred by saying ‘one hundred one, one hundred two, one hundred three’ and so on, but he told her that he could count one

hundred dollars, and that he didn't expect ever to have that much money.

"‘But, Austin,’ he said very earnestly, ‘I will learn to read and then I am going to get that book the preacher and Mr. John told us about—*Robinson Crusoe*. Then, too,’ he said with that lovely expression around his eyes, ‘I hope some day to read all the stories about Christopher Columbus and George Washington, and about England, where Missus Sarah’s husband was born. Did you know, Austin,’ Abe asked, ‘that there are a lot of books about Virginia, and my father and all of his people came from there, and so did my mother, and Missus Sarah and all of her folks. So, I want to hurry up and learn to read and get some books about Virginia. That’s the reason I can’t take much time to study figures; I must learn to read.’

“Abe attended a school over there where the town of Athertonville is now located,” said Mr. Gollaher. “It was con-

ducted by a Monk whose name, I believe, was Zack Riley.* Abe always said he went for one term (a term in those days was two months), but to my certain knowledge he was not there more than ten days. First one thing and then another, his father being one of them, would keep him away. Lots of times Knob Creek was so high he couldn't get across it, and frequently his mother's illness would keep him at home. Abe could not be persuaded to leave his mother if her illness confined her to bed. I have known him to sit in the house day after day when his mother was sick because he was afraid she might want a drink of water or something, and Abe thought nobody else could wait on her in the right way. He loved his mother more than anything else in the world, and she loved Abe, too; she loved him so much that my mother used to say: 'Well, Nancy thinks she's going to that child when she dies.'

*According to Joseph H. Barrett's history of Lincoln it was Zachariah Riney.

“Abe attended another school, over there in the woods, that was taught by a journeyman teacher,* but the results were about the same. He always said he didn’t get up much interest because he couldn’t be there every day, and when he missed it made the teacher mad. His most interested and most successful teacher in this section was Mrs. Sarah Hodgen, and when she and Abe finally got the men of the neighborhood to build a schoolhouse over near Hodgen’s Mill he was the happiest boy in the world.”

*The latter school referred to, according to the same authority, was taught by a man named Caleb Hazel.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARSON AND THE COONSKIN CAP

UNDER a big maple tree, which stood on a smooth, grassy plat of ground, at the foot of a knob, a platform and pulpit had been built of poplar logs, split in two with a whip-saw. The big maple dipped toward the knob until its branches laced with the limbs of the trees growing on the hillside. In front of it was a grove of many smaller trees, whose lower limbs had been trimmed by the pioneers so there would be no need for a sinner to duck when he started to the altar.

Directly facing the pulpit was a long bench—the mourners' bench—built upon stump-like legs, while scattered promiscuously through the grove were logs and smoothed-off stumps,—pews of the mem-

bers of the Knob Creek congregation. This ideal spot for a camp-meeting was known for miles around as the "Church of Maple Trees."

There was always much excitement among the pioneers during these religious revivals, which lasted a week; one meeting in the late spring and one in the early fall. Other interests were subordinated by the promoters of the camp-meeting, and all became, for the time being, laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord.

For at least a week beforehand, the parson (a journeyman preacher) would visit among the pioneers to work up interest and to let the remoter people know the date of the meeting. The preacher was paid but little those days, but he was beloved and respected; welcomed in every home, given the best there was to eat, and furnished a horse to ride. Indeed, he was a hero, and the people followed him, believing implicitly in him and in his teachings.

When the camp-meeting was in progress, the settlers came prepared to stay the entire week, and any who could not find shelter in the homes of the neighbors remained in the woods and slept beneath the wide-spreading trees or the over-hanging cliffs.

Mrs. Lincoln was a devoutly religious woman and never tired trying to promote the religious welfare of the community. Closely associated with her in this work were Mrs. Hodgen, Mrs. Gollaher and Mrs. Walters. Thomas Lincoln was not so enthusiastic as his wife, but he attended the meetings and often became deeply interested, even excited, over the matter of his soul's salvation. At such times he would join in the singing and shouting, and otherwise display a deeply emotional spirit; but he would soon forget, and was most of the time looked on as a "backslider."

Not that he was irreligious or immoral. He was simply indifferent. Restlessness

was his pet weakness. He had the wandering foot, and looking for other locations for a home was his hobby. He found many, too, in different parts of Kentucky and Tennessee and Indiana, and was forever threatening to move. Home-hunting was little short of a mania with him, so much so that at times he entirely forgot his duty to his family in his desire to explore new regions. Because of his roving propensities he was not counted as one of the community's substantial citizens, and the sincerity of his camp-meeting conversions was doubted by his neighbors.

But his wife, the mother of Abraham, kept the light burning in the little cabin home. The worn old Bible, the only book in the Lincoln library, was her refuge and her strength. She taught Abraham and his sister to pray and they all made brave efforts to sing. Abraham, during his moments of sadness, for even as a lad he was touched with melancholy, would hum the pioneers' favorite hymn, *The Old Ark's*

A-moving, and every night before he closed his eyes he breathed a simple prayer.

A camp-meeting was now at its height in the Church of Maple Trees. It was early fall and the leaves were yet clinging to their boughs though some of them in the topmost branches were turning yellow, giving to the forest church a vaulted arch of green and gold.

Thomas Lincoln became deeply interested in this particular meeting and on the second day he sought the mourners' bench and on the third day prayed aloud when called on by the Reverend Mr. Gentry. Mrs. Lincoln was jubilant over the effect Brother Gentry's sermons were having on her husband, and expressed the belief to Mrs. Gollaher that he had at last found permanent favor with the Lord.

Abe and Austin, as the "official heralds," were sent out each morning with invitations to the families that had not attended the meetings, to come and enjoy

the Godly messages of the evangelist. The boys rode "double" on an old mule and traveled in haste since they were required to be on the grounds in time for dinner and the afternoon services.

"The arrangement to send us out in the morning," said Mr. Gollaher, "was made, of course, because our parents knew we would get back for dinner, and so, very naturally, get back in time for the afternoon preaching. Abe was always a big eater, but I was even a bigger one, and after we had jolted around over these hills for four or five hours, we were good and ready to have our physical needs attended to."

"Austin," said Abe, as he tenderly patted his dog, "father has been on the 'mourners' bench' and has prayed out loud once or twice, but I don't know so much about his religion."

"Why, Abe, what's he done to make you say that?" asked Austin.

"Kicked Honey last night, and I don't

believe anybody with even a little religion will kick a dog when it rubs its nose against him in a friendly way. That was all Honey did; just put his nose up against father's knee, and father kicked him on his twisted leg. I haven't been on the mourners' bench," continued Abe, "but I wouldn't kick anybody's dog. What do you think about it, Austin?"

"Well, I don't know; maybe your father thinks it's no harm to kick a dog; maybe he thinks God doesn't like dogs."

"No, surely he wouldn't think that," said Abe earnestly. "He would be a mighty funny God if He didn't like a good dog."

On the fifth day of the meeting a goodly number were gathered for the morning service and the hour for the sermon had arrived, but the preacher had not. Noon came and still no parson. There was much excitement, much speculation as to his whereabouts, and Thomas Gollaher and Thomas Lincoln hurriedly set out in

search of him, he being a guest in the home of the former.

But the good man had left the house alone, as was his custom, to stroll through the wilderness and commune with nature for a brief season before expounding the gospel. On this particular morning he had set out earlier than usual, and was seen to follow the path down to Knob Creek, to cross the foot-log and disappear in the woods. Earnest and systematic search revealed no slightest trace of him. His disappearance was as complete as though he had been gathered up in trailing clouds of glory. For a long time Brother Gentry and his unceremonious departure was the subject of much discussion; a few believed him an impostor, but the faith of the many was unshaken.

Theories without end were advanced, but the one generally accepted was that he had received a “call” to other fields and had left neglecting to inform the congregation of his intention. He had been

heard to say that these calls from the Lord often came to him unexpectedly and that he obeyed without the loss of so much as a moment's time.

But to one of the youthful pioneers the hasty departure of the preacher brought sadness, if not black distrust. Abraham's coonskin cap, the one that Mrs. Hodgen had made for him—his best Sunday-go-to-meeting coonskin cap—had disappeared contemporaneously with the parson.

On the day before, it seems, while the reverend gentleman was crossing Knob Creek, a sudden gust of wind blew his hat from his bald head. The hat was caught in the swift current of the stream and carried far beyond any human reach. Now, the Lincoln cabin was close at hand, so the parson went there to beg protection for his head, and Abraham's mother gladly accommodated him with Abraham's coon-skin cap.

“If that wasn't stealing, what was it?”

Abe inquired of Austin. "And I don't believe he got any call from the Lord, for if he had the Lord would have told him to take time to bring my cap back to me, or to hang it on a pole where we could see it when we passed. God doesn't want anybody preaching for Him who takes caps or anything else that doesn't belong to 'em."

"But, Abe," said Austin, "the preacher is baldheaded, and it was chilly that morning and he might have taken cold if he had nothing on his head."

"That's so," said Abe, "but it doesn't make it right for the preacher to steal; he might have pulled one of his socks down over his head. Besides, I saw him slip some walnuts in his pocket the other day; and when he caught sight of me he looked mighty sheepish. Of course, we didn't care how many nuts he took, but he ought to have asked for them. Don't you ever take anything, Austin, that doesn't belong to you, for it won't do you any good.

That preacher's sure to have trouble over that cap. It might even turn into a coon and scratch all the skin off his bald head." And Abe's wide mouth expanded into a grin, and Austin roared with laughter.

CHAPTER XIII

ABRAHAM AND THE CHURCH

ABRAHAM was spending the night with the Hodgens. He had said his prayers and had been tucked away in his trundle bed, a bed kept especially for him. Mrs. Hodgen thought him asleep until, greatly to her surprise, she heard him get up and tiptoe to the open door, where he stood looking out at the big gloomy trees, over which a mellow summer moon was shining. "Down there in the grove would be a good place to build the church," he whispered to himself, "and I am going to help the men cut down the trees and fix the logs."

"What's the matter, Abraham?" asked Mrs. Hodgen, "can't you sleep?"

"Yes, Missus Sarah," he answered, "but before I go to sleep I want to promise you that I'll cut down some trees and shape some logs for the church you want to build. I reckon I could cut down one a day, trim it and get it ready. If the men will cut down two trees a day, it wouldn't be long till you'd have enough logs to build the church."

"That is true, my boy," answered Mrs. Hodgen, "but the men say they are too busy to build the church. They have been putting me off for a long time, but in the morning we'll make Mr. John promise to ask the men again if they won't get the logs ready." And she tucked the boy once more in his trundle bed, kissing him good night and thanking him for his promise of help.

That little whispered speech of Abe's as he sat in the open door, bathed in the summer moonlight, was really the inspiration for the building of Hodgenville's first church, for the next morning Mr.

John promised his mother, in Abraham's presence, that he would see that her dream of a "house of worship" came true. Young Lincoln was very happy, not because a church then meant anything to him, but because Mrs. Hodgen was pleased. Abraham now knew the church was a certainty, because Mr. John had promised, and Mr. John never forgot his promises, or failed to keep his word.

Mrs. Hodgen never faltered in her efforts to interest the pioneers in the enterprise so dear to her heart; indeed, as the days passed, she became more enthusiastic, more determined, and though she gave a building site near the mill, yet she had much trouble in getting the project started. The pioneers were busy men and then, too, most of them believed that the wide-spreading canopy of heaven was all the house of worship that was necessary—that the camp-meeting ground was sufficient.

Acting on Abraham's suggestion, Mis-

sus Sarah went to the mill day after day and talked "church-building" to every man who came there, always saying that the child, Abraham Lincoln, was going to cut down one small tree each day and shape the log ready for the builders. "And surely," she would add, "if that boy can do so much for us—if he is willing to work early and late—you will certainly help." In this manner, Mrs. Hodgen got many promises and the church was in time a reality.

"Missus Sarah," said Abraham, "when the church is finished I hope that preacher who left our house with my coonskin cap on his head, and never came back with it, won't come here to preach. I kindo' believe it was stealing for him to go away with my cap, and I wouldn't like to hear him preach, because I'd feel like he wasn't the right kind of a man to tell people what God wanted them to do."

"Now, Abraham," admonished Mrs. Hodgen, "you must be forgiving; you

must try to feel that the preacher just forgot to return your cap before he left the neighborhood, and that he did not intend to keep it. Then, too, my boy," she continued, in her gentle manner, "don't you know the preacher was bald, and the day cool, and he might have frozen his head had he gone away bareheaded."

"That's so," answered Abraham, in a solemn meditative way, "and I reckon his bald head would have got a little cold; but do you know, Missus Sarah, he had better mend his ways or his bald head will get mighty hot some of these days. I saw him doing some other things that weren't right, and I don't believe the Lord wants a man like that to be telling the people what's right and what's wrong. Some time he might preach a sermon and say it was all right to take caps and walnuts and hickory nuts without asking for them."

When John Hodgen made a snare for Abe, the boy looked at it soberly and then

threw a stick against the trigger. The sapling, to which one end of the cord was tied, flew up with great force, looping the string tightly around one end of the stick.

“Now,” said Mr. Hodgen, “that is the way you’ll catch them. When Mr. Rabbit, or Mr. Coon, or Mr. Opossum nibbles the bait he’ll be caught, and won’t get loose till you go to the snare the next morning and take the cord from around his neck.”

“Yes, I see,” said Abraham, “but that thing will choke them to death, and they might be a long time dying, and I don’t want to catch them that way. I’d rather catch them in traps, so I could turn them loose if they looked very pitiful. I *have* turned lots of them loose,” he added, then smilingly: “and I believe they thanked me when they got back to their homes in the woods, and told their families that an ugly boy turned them loose,” and there was a twinkle in Abraham’s sober eyes.

“Now, Mr. John,” continued the boy,

"I couldn't sleep at night if I set a snare like that. It's not fair to fool rabbits and 'possums and things by offering them something to eat that's going to kill them almost as quick as they touch it. That would be a whole lot like somebody wrapping up your sore toe in a rag with rattle snake poison on the rag. All night I'd be thinking of something choking to death out in the woods. When Missus Sarah gets her church built and the preachers come and preach, maybe they'll get some of the men to quit killing things they don't need. Please, Mr. John," begged the boy, "don't show Austin how to make snares; if he knew, he'd have them strangling game every night."

Mr. Hodgen, after trying vainly to amuse Abraham with the snare, the bow and arrow, the cross-bow and the rifle, declared he did not believe the boy would kill anything if he were starving. But the miller found Abraham very much alive to the things that interested older people.

"Abraham's mind is more than usual," Mr. Hodgen would say, "it is so full of astonishing things that at times it's uncanny. Why, I would rather listen to him talk than to half the men in the settlement. He always finds something new along the road and tells me about it every time he comes to the mill."

"When Mrs. Hodgen asked young Pottinger, of the neighborhood, to help cut the logs for the church, telling him of Abe's proposal," said Mr. Gollaher, "his mother, Mrs. Mary Pottinger, overheard the request and objected. She told Mrs. Hodgen that she was afraid of the Lincoln boy; saying that she believed he was sent to the world by the devil to do some evil thing; that his mind was even brighter than her husband's, and that her husband was 'counted a smart man.' When Mrs. Hodgen called her attention to Abraham's 'wonderful goodness,' Mrs. Pottinger threw up her hands and exclaimed: 'That's one of the tricks of the

devil!' When pressed to tell what she thought might happen, she said that some day the devil would send a band of Indians against the settlement, and use Abraham Lincoln as his instrument to accomplish its destruction.

"But Mrs. Hodgen predicted a great future for young Abe. She believed he would become a preacher and deliver his first sermon in the log church he was then trying to build, and that he would ultimately become a great and famous divine," continued Mr. Gollaher. "But Mr. John disagreed with his mother, contending that Abe would 'certainly become a great judge.' He said Abe's inclination to measure well before delivering, and to consider well before going ahead, fitted him for the *woolsack*."

"Teach Abraham all you can," was John Hodgen's appeal to his mother; "teach him to read and to write, never mind the arithmetic; figuring will naturally follow."

“On one of his trips to Elizabethtown, Mr. John bought a volume of *Æsop’s Fables*, and when Abe and I made our next visit to the mill he brought forth the book and at the same time a small tray filled with the prettiest bullets I had ever seen,” declared Lincoln’s playmate.

“Now,’ said Mr. John, ‘I have a present for you boys. Here’s this book for one of you and these bullets for the other, but I can’t decide which to give you, Abraham, or which to give Austin.’ ‘I don’t want the bullets,’ Abe said very quickly, and just as promptly I growled: ‘I don’t want the book.’ ‘Then,’ said Mr. John, ‘the question is easily settled.’ And he gave Abe *Æsop’s Fables*, and I took the bullets. Well, sir, Abe fairly hugged that book, and thanking Mr. John, he said: ‘Wouldn’t swap it for a cow and calf.’ I was equally pleased with the bright new bullets. And thus it was all through life,” sighed the old man, “Abe kept on gathering books and reading them, and I kept on gathering bullets and

shooting them.” Then, as though trying to justify his life in the woods with his gun, he said: “But I’ve seen the day when I could shoot a squirrel’s eyes out every time I touched the trigger even if he was on the highest branch of the tallest tree in these hills.

“Abe was afraid to take the book home, lest his father, who still had no patience with book learning, would find it and destroy it. So Missus Sarah was made the custodian of these wonderful stories, and she read them and reread them to Abe until he could repeat many of them word for word,” said Mr. Gollaher, as he turned the pages of the old Bible he held in his lap.

“Abe sharpened his ax and went to work like an experienced woodsman, felling trees for the church. And when we reported to Missus Sarah that we had four logs ready, she gave us a big ‘spread’ of blackberry jam on corn-bread,” laughed old Austin as he recalled young ‘Austin and his immortal playmate.

CHAPTER XIV

A FRIENDLY CONTEST

KNOWING that *Æsop* now awaited him at Missus Sarah's, Abe had many reasons to give his mother for extra trips to the mill.

"He always wanted me to go along," said Mr. Gollaher, "and whenever mother would let me I accompanied him, but I didn't hear many of the fables read, because the woods and Nolynn River were too attractive. On our way to Hodgen Mill one day Abe was suddenly attacked with the old-fashioned 'bellyache.' 'It's mother's green apple pie,' he said, 'and it feels like a knife was ripping through me.' So when we came to the Stone House we stopped and asked for a cup of hot

water with some red pepper in it. The tea gave Abe relief in a little while and we were about to leave when he spied a newspaper lying on a chair. He picked it up, examined it carefully, and seemed so much interested that the old woman who fixed the tea for him asked him if he would like to take the paper along and read it. Abe very quickly answered ‘Yes-suh,’ you may be sure. It was a copy of the paper printed at Bardstown and was several weeks old, but Abe prized it highly and guarded it very closely.”

Since it was necessary to pass the mill on the way from the Lincoln to the Hodgen home, Abe, Austin and Honey always stopped to say “Hi” to Mr. John.

“Upon this occasion,” said Mr. Gollaher, “a youngster called Freckles who was loafing around the mill awaiting the grinding of his corn, threw a stone and hit Abe’s crippled dog. Honey yelped and Abe cried out:

“‘Who hit my dog?’

“ ‘Freckles,’ I said.

“ ‘Why did you do that, Freckles?’ asked Abe, quicker and hotter than I had ever heard him speak before.

“ ‘Because the dog’s ugly and I wanted to hear him holler,’ replied Freckles.

“ ‘Well,’ said Abe, ‘I am ugly too. Next time you want to hit somebody ugly, hit me; I’ll know *why* you hit me; Honey doesn’t.’ Then Abe walked away and sat down upon a sack of corn, and patted Honey. When Freckles approached him, Abe asked: ‘How would you like for your father to slap you, when you didn’t know what he was slapping you for? And besides,’ he continued, ‘if everything that’s ugly ought to be hit, somebody would be hitting you most of the time, and maybe lightning might strike you and kill you. You are uglier than Honey and meaner than the meanest dog I know.’

“That kind of talk from Abe surprised me, but I was mighty glad to hear it, because I used to think some of the boys

tried to run over him. I wanted to see him fight, but he held his temper and didn't seem to mind the taunts from the lads down around the mill. But if anybody mistreated Honey, Abe would show fight quick enough, and then the boys, I noticed, would leave him and his dog alone. He had a funny way of talking to the lads whenever he meant business," chuckled Mr. Gollaher. "It was kind of mild and yet it was forceful. And when he cut loose they didn't bother him again for quite a while."

John Hodgen called Freckles into the mill and said to him: "If you throw any more stones at Abraham Lincoln's dog, there's going to be trouble around here, and I am going to stand by and watch Abraham give you a good whipping."

"Abe can't do it," Freckles muttered.

"Well, let's see," said Mr. Hodgen. "Now this isn't to be a fight; but a friendly little contest to see which is the better man.

“Come here, Abe; come here, Freckles,” called Mr. John. “Now, Freckles, you say Abraham can’t whip you. What do you say, Abraham?”

“I don’t want to fight,” answered Lincoln without the slightest change of expression in his sad face.

“But, boys,” said Mr. Hodgen, “I told you this was not to be a fight, but just a little friendly contest to see which one would whip if a sure-enough fight should ever take place. Now,” he went on, “I want to see which one can lift the other the easiest, by taking hold at the nape of the neck and the seat of the trousers.”

“Ready!” announced both boys.

“Turn around, Freckles; take hold, Abe; now lift!” the miller commanded.

With ease Abraham held Freckles aloft.

“Now,” said Mr. Hodgen, “see if you can shake him.”

And Abraham shook Freckles till his teeth chattered.

When Freckles tried to lift Abraham in the same way, he failed utterly.

"Now, then, Freckles, you surely don't think you can whip Abe, do you?" asked Mr. Hodgen.

"No, sir, I can't whip him and I won't throw any more rocks at his dog," was Freckles' honest acknowledgment and voluntary promise.

"During the excitement," said Mr. Gollaher, "I thought Abe had forgotten about those fables, but I was mistaken. Just as soon as he let go of Freckles he said: 'Mr. John, I'm going down to your house to get Missus Sarah to read to me out of the book.' As it was about dinner time, Mr. John went with us.

"Where's your newspaper?" I asked, thinking maybe Abe had forgotten it and left it at the mill, but he had it folded up nicely, sticking between the ear-laps of his cap.

"When we reached the Hodgen home we found dinner waiting for us, but Abe

had to show Missus Sarah that old paper before eating. After we had finished, she examined it more closely, and found in it a small notice of the sale of some negroes at Bardstown the month before. Then Missus Sarah said to Mr. John: ‘You might have gone to Bardstown and bought one of those negro men had you known of the sale. The work on the farm is too heavy for the four men and the boy we now have, and we must buy another negro.’

“ ‘I have heard,’ said Abe to Missus Sarah, ‘that some people don’t treat their negroes right. You know those travelers—the man and his wife—who came through here not long ago, told us that they knew an old man who owned lots of slaves, and that every time one of them went blind, he soon died; and everybody believed the old man killed them to keep from having to feed them. And they said, too,’ Abe went on, ‘that he was awful mean to them; that he sometimes

whipped them until they bled. I think people ought to be good to them, because, I reckon, they are human beings just like we are.'

"That was Abraham Lincoln's first speech in behalf of the negro, and it was made not against slavery, of course, but against cruelty, just as he protested against cruelty of all kinds," said Mr. Gollaher. "We didn't know much about slavery here in our neighborhood during the period the Lincolns lived here. We were most all too poor to own slaves. Mrs. Hodgen and her sons owned a few, and so did the LaRues, but they were good to their negroes, and the subject of cruelty to slaves was not discussed in this section at that time."

CHAPTER XV

A GOOD TIME UP THERE

THEY had finished the meal, and Abe, Mr. John and Austin were sitting under the shade of a tree in the yard, while Missus Sarah was superintending the clearing of the table. In a little while she would be there to read to Abraham from his favorite *Æsop*. Mr. John had propped himself against a tree and had bitten off a cheek-full of tobacco. “Abe,” he began, “you and Austin will tell me the truth if I ask you a question, won’t you?”

“Yes, Mr. John,” both answered at once.

“Have either of you ever taken a chew of tobacco?”

“Once,” answered Austin.

"Well, did it make you sick, Austin?" asked Mr. Hodgen.

"No, sir," was the emphatic answer.

"If it didn't make you sick you will very likely be a user of tobacco the rest of your life," said Mr. Hodgen.

"No, sir, it never does make me sick," Austin assured him.

"But you just told me that you had taken but one chew," said Mr. Hodgen, "and now you tell me that it never does make you sick, which answer indicates that you have taken more than one chew."

"Yes, sir, I was just going to tell you that I have taken more than one chew, because I have been having the toothache, and mother told me I could put tobacco around my gums to ease the pain. It's mighty good for that," Austin explained.

"Now, Abe, how about you?" Mr. Hodgen asked.

"No, sir, never, Mr. John," Abraham very earnestly answered.

"Do you think you'd like to learn?"

“I might.”

“Why do you think you might?”

“Because they say it will keep teeth from getting rotten and falling out.”

“I have heard that, too,” said Mr. Hodgen, “but I don’t take much stock in such a claim. Did you boys know there isn’t any kind of animal that will chew tobacco?”

“Grandfather had a billy-goat a long time ago,” Austin replied, “that chewed up tobacco stems and swallowed them, but it soon killed him, or something killed him, and grandfather said he thought it was the tobacco.”

“Well,” Mr. Hodgen didn’t smile, “if tobacco kills goats, it certainly would kill boys, so both of you had better leave it alone.”

“I don’t like it,” said Abraham. “I don’t believe I’ll ever try it.”

But Missus Sarah now interrupted. She had the *Aesop* book in her hands, and Abe straightway forgot tobacco and everything else.

“While mother reads to Abraham you and I, Austin, will go feed the pigs, then we'll all go back to the mill, for you boys must start home early.”

“I'll tell you what I am going to do,” announced Abraham a little later, as they were on their way to the mill, “I am going to buy you out one of these days. I am going away for about twenty-five years, and then I am coming back to buy the mill, and live here the rest of my life and grind corn for the people, just like you are grinding it, Mr. John. You would be old then, and you and Missus Sarah could live with us.”

“In twenty-five years, my boy, I may not be here, and Missus Sarah will surely be on the other side of the Great River. Twenty-five years is a long time and I may be way up yonder where the stars shine. Do you think I am good enough to go to Heaven?” he asked, smiling.

Young Abraham looked up at Mr. John

and there were tears in his eyes, but he made no reply. He knew none was necessary.

“We strolled on through the meadow in silence,” said Mr. Gollaher. “Abe was absorbed and obviously meditating. That reference to crossing the Great River had saddened him and given him food for thought. To my surprise, and to the surprise of Mr. Hodgen, he finally said: ‘I wish that woman at the Stone House hadn’t given me that old newspaper; then I wouldn’t have thought about that old man killing his blind slaves.’ Then, turning to Mr. John, Abe said: ‘If I were in Heaven I’d want God to take you, and mother and father and sister Sarah, and Missus Sarah right away, too, so we could have a good time up there together. When God wants a sure-enough friend in Heaven He’ll send an angel after you, Mr. John.’

“Well, sir,” continued Mr. Gollaher, “I have never seen anybody, from that

day to this, appreciate anything more than Mr. Hodgen appreciated that remark from Abe. He stopped there in the meadow and put his big strong arms around the boy and hugged him. His voice was too husky to talk, I guess.

“After a time, he smiled and asked: ‘What about Austin? Would you have him brought up to Heaven right away, or would you let him stay here for a while longer?’

“‘I might ask God to bring him up there, and I might not,’ answered Abe. ‘If he wanted to come I guess I would ask God to let him in, but if he wanted to stay here I would leave him alone until I thought he was killing too many things of the woods, then I would beg God to take him—whether Austin wanted to come or not.’ ”

CHAPTER XVI

THE NICKNAME

THE old gum-spring at the foot of the hill—that hill upon which stood the log grist mill of John Hodgen—was a favorite spot with the thirsty traveler who passed that way. Growing around the spring and bending over it was a cluster of tall willows, which protected it from the summer sun, and beneath the willows was a bench made of a split log, upon which the weary might rest while he quenched his thirst. Upon every tree, a gourd was hooked over the stob of a limb. The spring was walled around with smooth gray rocks and over it, upon four cedar posts, was a rough moss-covered roof.

The spring was John Hodgen's pride.

It was his standing invitation to all who came near to drink and rest. Many people in the neighborhood—more than a century ago—pronounced the water healing, and came with jugs and carried it away to their homes. The spring is still there, but it has no care-taker and is now no more than any other spring along Nolynn River, except it is generally known that the child Lincoln played around it and drank of its water.

The miller permitted no rowdyism around the spring, and dabbling in it was positively forbidden. John Hodgen had worked to make the place inviting, and he insisted that all visitors “behave themselves” while enjoying his gum-spring’s refreshing hospitality. Old man Kastor—one of the wits of the neighborhood—used to lift his hat and bow his head before taking a drink, saying: “This water is worth praying for.”

The boys who played around the old spring over a century ago all had their

nicknames, even as the boys of to-day. Jimmie Ashcraft, for example, was called Freckles for obvious reasons, and Austin Gollaher was known as Buster, because he was big and fat and strong.

Four or five boys of the woods—"corn-fetchers and meal-toters" Mr. Hodgen called them—were grouped around the spring one hot summer day. Among them was Abraham Lincoln. He was standing close to the little log trough through which the spring water trickled into its well-like rock walls. Old man Pottinger rode up, alighted from his mule, took a gourd from a stob and said: "Stand aside, 'High,' I want a drink." He was speaking to Abraham Lincoln. The boys snickered and laughed—Abraham had been nicknamed and the youngsters were elated. Mr. Pottinger explained that the name was appropriate for two reasons: one, that Abe was extremely high for his age, and the other, that he met everybody with the salutation "Hi!" "So, Abe," he

said good-naturedly, “we’ll just call you High after this.”

The boys began at once to use the new name every time they spoke to young Lincoln, and they made it convenient to speak frequently, since they could easily see he did not like the appellation. He made no protest, but he walked away and sat down upon a rock and covered his face with his hands.

“Abe,” said Austin, as the two climbed the hill to the old mill, “I haven’t teased you and I’m not going to, but you oughtn’t get mad at the boys for calling you High; that’ll just make them bother you that much more, until we’ll have to fight them, and we don’t want to do that.”

Abe made no reply to Austin’s advice further than to say he wasn’t mad, but when the two reached the mill he told Mr. Hodgen that he had been nicknamed High, and that he did not like it, adding with a shamefaced smile: “I know I’m high, and my legs and arms are outland-

ish, and I'm bigger than any boy my age, but I don't want to be called High."

"Why, my dear boy," exclaimed the miller, "the meaning of high is lofty, big, great! You ought to be pleased. You are tall and big, of course, but the name does not apply to your height; it applies to your character, to your goodness of heart, and to your superiority over other boys. Don't you like the big, tall, straight trees of the woods better than the small, knotty, little ones? You are a big, tall, straight tree, Abraham, and you tower above the boys who tease you; they are scrub oaks and sassafras saplings when compared with you."

"But, Mr. John, I don't want to be called High; I am ashamed of myself because I am so high," Abraham answered in his quiet emphatic way.

"Surely, Abraham," said Mr. Hodgen, "you didn't leave the spring because you were afraid of those boys! Did you?" he asked quietly.

"No, sir, Mr. John, I am not afraid of all of them," Abraham said simply without animation.

"Then, take the bucket, go down to the spring and get some fresh water for me," and with that Mr. Hodgen handed Abraham the water bucket.

Slowly the boy walked down the hill to the spring. His tormentors were still there. Austin started to follow, but the miller called him back. Before Abe reached the foot of the hill there was a shout of "Here comes High," but Abraham moved on with his customary long indifferent swing.

Mr. Hodgen smilingly watched from the mill window, and Austin stood by him greatly agitated.

Now, Abraham was anything but a fighter; he would not even quarrel. He talked so very little that there was no opportunity for dispute with his boy associates, and, while attempts had been made to involve him in boyish difficulties, he

did no more than look into the faces of his tormentors and walk away.

A youngster by the name of Carl Vittitoe approached Abraham as he neared the spring, the bucket swinging from his arm. "High," said young Vittitoe, "I have dropped my knife into the spring; the water's too deep for me to get it, but your arms are so long you can reach it easy enough."

Abraham put the bucket under the water spout, "caught" it full and started back toward the mill with that same indifferent, characteristic swing. The Vittitoe boy grabbed him by the arm and ripped a big hole in his shirt-sleeve. Very quietly Abe set the bucket down, and just as quietly he wound his long arms around young Vittitoe, carried him to the spring and soused him, headforemost, into the water. When he brought the boy up, dripping and sputtering, he was holding his knife tightly in his wet hand.

Then Abraham said to the boy: "Carl,

when father has a piece of timber that is too short, he splices it, so I had to splice my arm by using yours.” And he picked up his bucket and went to the mill, never once looking back.

“See here, Abraham,” said Mr. Hodgen, feigning anger, “don’t you know I don’t want you to play in that spring? Didn’t I see you dipping Carl in the water?”

“Yes, sir, but I wasn’t playing,” Abraham answered.

“Oh! you were fighting, were you?”

“No, sir, I wasn’t fighting; I was helping Carl get his knife out of the spring.”

After this episode the boys called him ‘Abe.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EXPLORERS

AUSTIN GOLLAHER'S grandfather had gone with a raft of pelts to Louisville, and Austin was staying with his grandmother farther up among the Knob Creek hills. Abraham was lonely—pathetically lonely with Austin away. His only diversion was to wander over the hills and through the woods, with Honey following at his heels. It was now spring, and since Abraham could handle a hoe or a spade fairly well, much of his time was spent in the fields.

Austin away, Abraham and Honey made the weekly trip to the mill alone. Saturday was always the busiest “grinding day” and there was a rush among the

children of the pioneers "to get there first," for they knew that the bag of corn to reach the mill first went to the hopper first; that rule of taking them as they came was always closely observed.

"Everywhere Abraham goes Honey goes, and I'm glad of it," said Mrs. Lincoln to Mrs. Gollaher one morning as the boy and the dog set off for the mill. "He may fool away more time by having Honey with him, but I believe he is some protection; at least, I'm not so uneasy when I know the two are together."

When Abraham dropped his sack of corn upon the mill floor, Mr. Hodgen said: "Late again; look at the bags ahead of you; it will be sundown before your turn comes, and I'll have to take you home again. I can't let you go through the dark woods alone."

"I am not afraid, Mr. John, and neither is Honey," answered the boy.

"But, Abraham," said Mr. Hodgen, somewhat out of humor, "why do you fool

your time away? You must get here earlier. You have seen these hills and hollows hundreds of times and I can't understand what you find to keep you so long on the road."

"Well, Mr. John," began Abraham, "Honey got a 'possum in a hollow stump, and I couldn't get him to leave it, and I couldn't leave Honey. I wanted to get here early to-day, but I just couldn't make Honey hurry."

Late in the afternoon Abraham's meal was sacked, and Mr. Hodgen blew three times on a cane-pole whistle. That was Abe's signal, and he knew it well and always listened for it. But this time he did not reply. Again and again the whistle was blown, but there was no response. Inquiry among the boys developed the fact that Abe had not been seen for two or three hours; that then he was sitting on the roots of a big tree, looking out upon the mill pond.

Standing upon a high bank, alarmed

and apprehensive, John Hodgen hallooed and gazed down into the green waters of Nolynn River as though to arouse Abe, who could not swim, from the bottom of the stream. He called at the top of his voice: "Abraham! Abraham! Abraham!" Out in the middle of the river a lazy muskrat lounged, and John Hodgen, thinking in his excitement that it was the top of the boy's coonskin cap, plunged into the water, diving where the muskrat was lounging.

From a messenger sent to his home, he learned that Abraham had been there but had left three hours before, presumably to go to the mill. For an hour he continued the search and then he sent a man to the Lincoln cabin to notify Abraham's parents and the Gollahers. They were asked to report to the mill, where they would decide upon a plan of action.

With anxious faces, pale in the light of their pine-knot torches, they soon gathered at the mill where many pioneers and

their families, having heard that Thomas Lincoln's boy Abraham was lost, had preceded them. Mr. Lincoln was greatly excited. Thomas Gollaher and Abraham Enlow tried to encourage him though sadly apprehensive themselves.

Mrs. Lincoln rubbed her poor white hands and prayed. "Mr. Hodgen," she asked, "have you seen the dog? Was Honey with Abraham when he came to the mill?"

"Yes, the dog was with him."

"Then," she said, "both have been drowned, or have been stolen by Indians who sometimes pass over their old trails on their way north. If Honey is alive, he will come home, or back to the mill."

Preparations were made for an all-night hunt, but none knew where to begin the search. They could not drag the river at night; so it was finally decided to go first through the woods surrounding the Hodgen home.

Mrs. Lincoln stood under the shed-like

porch of the house, where they stopped a moment while Mr. John got into some dry clothes, and was looking out into the somber depths of the grove which seemed to hover over her like a hideous monster, ready to strike her down with its big hands. Somewhere in the depths of the forest she saw, in her imagination, an Indian war-dance, and her thoughts turned back to the time when she, a little girl, was stolen by the savages. Then, awakened suddenly from her terrifying reverie, she cried out with all her strength: "Here's Honey! Here's Honey!"

From somewhere out of the night the dog came. He whined at her feet and looked up appealingly into the eyes of first one and then another, until, finding Mr. John, he jumped upon the miller and barked again and again, squarely in his face.

"Gather your torches!" John Hodgen commanded, "and we'll follow where the dog leads."

With a yelp, the panting Honey circled the corner of the house and dashed through the garden, barking as he ran. Everybody, as everybody usually does in such circumstances, expected the worst; expected the dog to lead them to Abraham's mangled body, though many a silent prayer went up for the boy's safety.

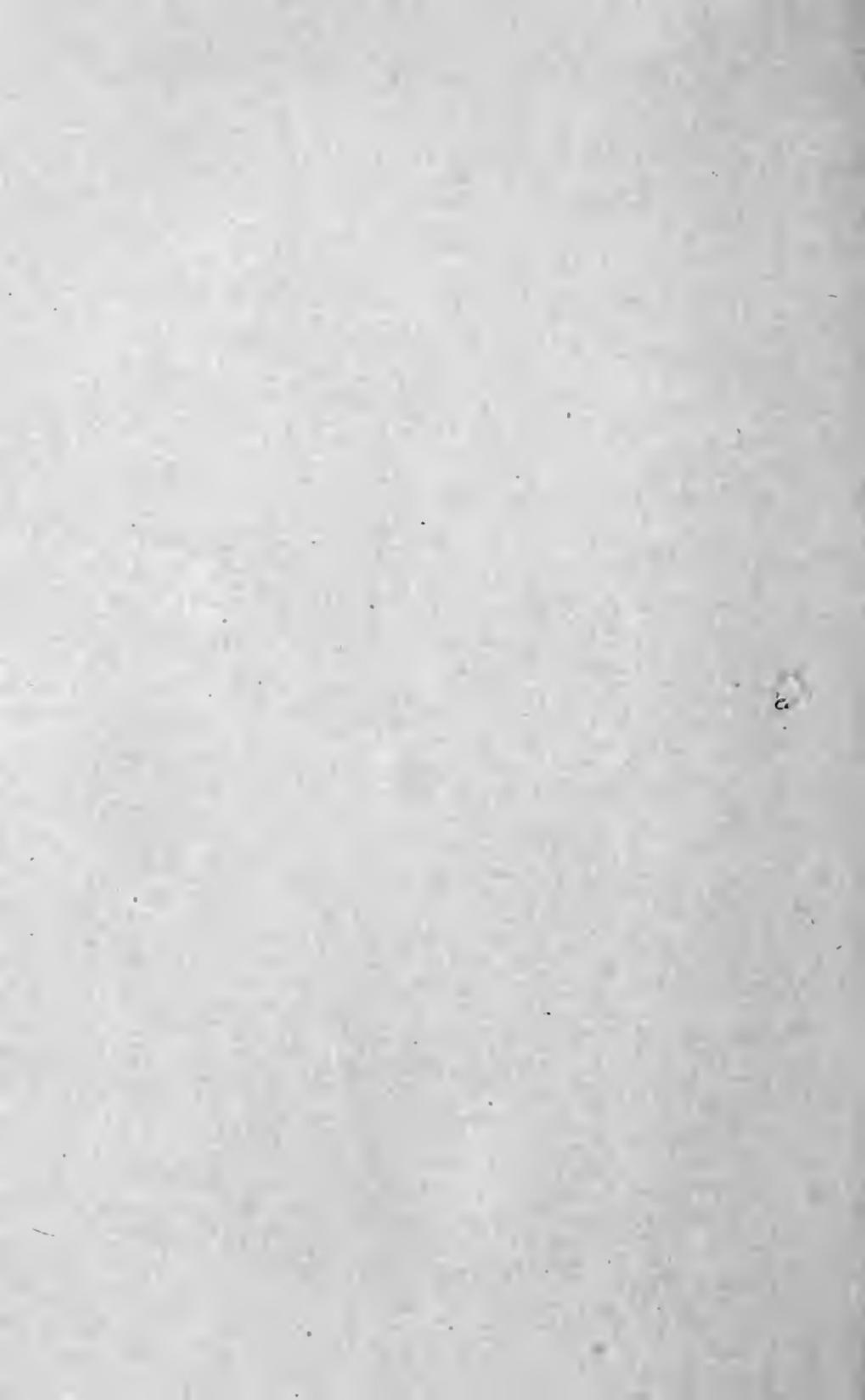
To the north and west of the Hodgen house Nolynn River circled, and it was straight to the river that Honey led the searching party.

"I know where the boy is!" shouted John Hodgen joyously. "Why didn't I think of it before? He's lost in that confounded cave; we'll soon find him and I'll bet he's not hurt a bit. But I can't imagine what the boy meant by going into that hole; I have never known him to do a thing like that before."

When they reached the cave, John Hodgen commanded every one to be quiet while he blew his whistle three times. There was a moment's anxious silence.



Nolynn River and the site of the Hodgen Mill



Then from somewhere back in the cave came a faint voice:

“Here I am, but I’m fastened!”

“I’ll get you out,” cried Mr. John. “Your meal is ready and you ought to have been on your way home a long time ago.”

When he at last reached Abe it was to find him tightly wedged between two large rocks, and when the miller pulled Abe groaned, because as he afterward said; “Some of my hide was coming off.”

“It’s a mystery,” declared Mr. Hodgen, “how the boy ever got himself in such a fix. For a while I thought we were going to need sledges to break the rock, but when I found it would be impossible to strike hard enough to do that in those close quarters, I just decided to pull Abraham out, even if I had to skin him.”

Young Lincoln was very much surprised to find the large searching party at the mouth of the cave. He had been busy trying to squeeze through and

thought little about the length of time he had been in the cave. After he had been hugged by his mother and Missus Sarah it was his father's time to be a little "affectionate." But John Hodgen interceded, saying:

"Now, Tom, Abraham is my prisoner, and I want you to give me your word that you won't whip the boy when you get him home, that you won't even scold him. The experience he has passed through is lesson enough. He'll never go into that cave again."

"I came home from my grandfather's late in the afternoon of the day Abe was lost," said Mr. Gollaher, "but I could not go with the searching party because they made me stay with my little sister. But I told mother they needn't have any fear, that Abe would turn up safe and sound."

The next day when the boys were discussing the adventure, Abe said: "Now, you see, Austin, Honey has paid me back for mending his broken leg."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FOX AND THE TRAP

“THERE is no use to worry or be sad and cry,” said Abraham one day as he wiped the tears from his eyes first with one and then the other of his shirt-sleeves. “It’s foolish, but I just can’t help it, Austin—I just can’t help it when I get to feeling like the little Brownfield children felt when their mother died.”

“What you crying about? What you talking about?” asked Austin impatiently.

“Nothing much,” Abe answered. “I’m just down in the mouth, like mother says she used to get before we moved over here from the Cave Spring Farm.”

“Tell me what’s the matter, Abe,” said Austin kindly.

“Well, I reckon I’m crying because father keeps on talking about moving to ‘Indian Anner,’ or somewhere a long ways from here, and I don’t want to go and neither does mother. And I’m afraid he won’t let me take Honey. Then I never will be happy. I believe Honey knows father doesn’t want him around, and that mother and I are worried about something, because when we talk about moving he just looks up at us for a minute or two, then kind o’ whines and goes off and curls up in a corner. Of course, I know if we go and I have to leave Honey here you will treat him all right, but he would be awful lonesome, because he loves me more than anybody knows.”

“But, Abe,” said Austin, “you have been sad about one thing and another ever since you were a baby. Mother says you looked worried the day after you were born. She says you are now as big as a fourteen-year-old boy, and that you oughtn’t to cry so much. Why, she said

she caught you crying yesterday when she chopped a chicken's head off, so's we could have it for sister's birthday dinner. You ate plenty of the chicken just the same," Austin added laughingly.

"People just can't know my feelings, and I reckon they never will. I wasn't crying about the chicken; I was crying because I felt bad about moving away from here. Of course, after the chicken was dead and cooked," continued Abe, "I ate some of it."

Perhaps the hardest whipping Abraham ever received from his father was for liberating a red fox from a trap. Mr. Lincoln had not been well for several days and his wife insisted that he take Abraham with him when he went to visit his traps, scattered through the hills and along the banks of Knob Creek. Thomas Lincoln was an expert trapper, and upon this particular occasion was unusually successful. He had caught a coon and a fox, and had about finished skinning

them, when Abraham, who had gone ahead to the next trap and discovered it held a fine red fox, deliberately lifted the trap door and invited the fox to enjoy his freedom:

“Why did you do that?” demanded Mr. Lincoln as he stepped up to Abraham, who stood in pleasant contemplation of the open trap door.

“Father,” replied the boy in his most appealing tones, “wasn’t two animals enough for one day? Just think how happy that old red fox is, to be out in the woods again.”

But Mr. Lincoln didn’t see it that way, and gave Abraham a cuff on the side of the head, and when they got home a sound whipping, over the protest of Mrs. Lincoln. After quiet was restored Mrs. Lincoln reproved Abraham in that gentle, sweet way of hers, and warned him that he must never be guilty of such a thing again.

"But, mother, I just couldn't help it," he said. "I knew it wasn't right—I just couldn't help it, and I reckon I'd have done it even had I thought father would have skinned me like he did the fox and the coon he caught. I'm mighty sorry I displeased father, but I'm glad that fox is back in the woods with its family."

Abraham had, a number of times before, turned loose his father's "catches," greatly to Austin's disgust, who threatened to tell on him if he didn't stop it. The two boys got into an argument over the right and wrong of the matter and the question was finally left to Mrs. Golalaher for settlement. She very promptly agreed with Austin that Abe was in the wrong, and said: "Tell me, Abraham, why do you do such foolish things?"

"Because," the boy replied, "we have no right to more than we need. There ain't no use in killing those animals and birds; and I don't like to see them

suffer. That is my reason for letting them out."

But after this, Abraham never molested his father's traps, though he wasn't convinced that it was right or legitimate to catch more than was actually needed.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GOAT AND THE COAT

IN THE yard of the Hodgen home beneath the great boughs of walnut and hickory trees, was a crudely constructed table, surrounded by benches made of split logs. It was "designed" and erected by John Hodgen for one purpose only: to bear the feast that the miller annually spread for his friends, who were invited from far and near to come, eat and be neighborly.

On the third Saturday in July, the Lincolns, the Gollahers, the Enlows, the Brownfields, the Walters, the Kirkpatricks, the LaRues and many others were expected to gather for the banquet without formal invitation, and to make merry

with their friends and neighbors. The day became generally known as the “Hodgen-Dinner-Day”; the people kept it in mind and the attendance grew larger each year.

It was at one of these Hodgen dinners, where the community’s needs were often discussed, that it was decided to build a schoolhouse and a church. Pledges were made not in writing, for a man’s word given at John Hodgen’s table was never broken. The church and schoolhouse were built, and Mrs. Hodgen saw her dream fulfilled. Then finally a town was “laid off” and named Hodgenville, in honor of Robert Hodgen.

“Right there where the old brick clerk’s office stands,” said Mr. Gollaher, “in front of the court-house, at the foot of the hill, I saw Abe’s dog, Honey, have a fight with a coon. I poked the coon out of a hollow tree and Honey grabbed him—grabbed him by the throat and killed

him.* When I came up to the mill, two hundred yards away, dragging the coon after me, Abe looked at Honey and Honey looked at Abe, then Abe said: ‘You didn’t have to do it, Honey; you didn’t have to kill that coon.’ ”

The dinner was on in earnest; the table piled high with venison, turkey, a young pig and numerous “side dishes.” Everybody was happy. Abe and Austin were eating from the top of a stump, and, like the grown-ups at the big table, were discussing the needs of the community. Austin wanted a gunsmith to move into the neighborhood, while Abe wanted a school-teacher, and there was a rather warm discussion as to which would be the more valuable acquisition.

A billy-goat was grazing in the yard. He was one of John Hodgen’s pets. In fact, he was petted and made over by ev-

*A Lincoln monument has been erected where those old buildings stood—upon the spot where Austin and Honey caught the coon in the hollow tree.

erybody whose sense of smell was not too acute. Abraham was fond of the goat, so fond, indeed, that his mother made him, on one occasion, go for a full day in nothing but his long-tailed shirt until she could wash and dry his trousers. Abraham had only one pair of trousers and when his mother, once each month, "freshened" them in Knob Creek, he was forced to wear a long shirt, or apron, until the cleansing ceremony was over.*

Old Mr. Kirkpatrick, one of the regular guests at the annual Hodgen dinner, was a very dignified and impressive individual, even in the matter of dress. He was the owner of a coat, fashioned somewhat after the style of the more modern Prince Albert, which he had brought with him from Virginia when he moved into the community several years before and which he had guarded jealously for something like a quarter of a century. Mr.

*Long shirts, or aprons, were worn by boys in those days and it was not unusual during the summer to meet a boy upon the highway in his shirt-tail.

Kirkpatrick never donned the famous garment except upon a state occasion such as the Hodgen dinner, or when he was expected to take some prominent part in the camp-meeting services.

The day was hot and all the pioneers except Mr. Kirkpatrick were in their shirt-sleeves. He was sweltering in the historic coat, buttoned tightly to the neck. After much persuasion, his wife succeeded in getting him to remove it, when she carefully folded the "garment of state" and placed it in the low forks of a small tree.

The school and church were under discussion, as was also a project to improve the roads to Bardstown and Elizabethtown, and Mr. Kirkpatrick had become so deeply interested in the welfare speeches that, although the dinner was over, he had forgotten he was in his shirt-sleeves and was not in the least embarrassed because of his undignified appearance. The meeting was drawing to a close; some of the far-distant visitors had already departed.

"Wife," commanded Mr. Kirkpatrick, "bring my coat and we will be going."

There was a smothered scream from Mrs. Kirkpatrick; she seemed about to swoon. The billy-goat had feasted on the tail of Mr. Kirkpatrick's coat, had, in fact, chewed it off almost to the buttons at the waistband. To say that the old gentleman was disturbed but lightly expresses it. He was ruined, heart-broken, he actually sobbed and then and there made a solemn vow never again to try to "fix himself up to look like a gentleman"; that thenceforth he would dress as the common herd dressed. And he kept his word. He became a sort of backwoods "raggedy man," uncouth and unkempt.

Mr. Hodgen and his mother were chagrined over the ungentlemanly behavior of the goat, and the miller energetically applied the lash.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Abraham with some show of excitement. "Why, Mr. John, don't you know the goat

thought he had as much right to eat Mr. Kirkpatrick's coat-tail as Mr. Kirkpatrick had to eat the pig you had on the table?"'

"You must get rid of that goat," interrupted Mrs. Hodgen.

"Take him, Abraham," said Mr. Hodgen, "he will carry your corn to the mill and your meal back home."

Thus through the misfortune of Mr. Kirkpatrick, Abraham Lincoln became the owner of a billy-goat—a piece of property he had long coveted.

"It seems to me," said Thomas Lincoln, "that Abraham has too many pets. He has a dog and a coon, and now the goat."

"Let him have it," said Mr. Hodgen. "It won't be in the way, and you haven't a long-tail coat, Tom."

"That's true," replied Mr. Lincoln, "but if that goat should form an appetite for trousers and eat up my only pair I'd be in a bad fix."

Abraham did not speak while the dis-

cussion between his father and Mr. Hodgen was going on, but when it was finally settled that he could accept the gift he said: "I'm mighty glad he's mine, and I don't think father will mind the goat much when he gets used to him; all animals, even people, have a funny smell. A horse may not like something about a man, but just suppose he'd try to throw the man every time he rode him. It's best for men and animals not to notice things they don't like in each other."

"It was a big job," said Mr. Gollaher, "to take the goat home that afternoon. He did lots of cutting up, and was sometimes inclined to use his head in urging his objection to the change of residence. To the surprise of both Abe and myself, Mr. Lincoln helped us when Billy became too unruly. However, at one time during the trip home I thought the jig was up. Mr. Lincoln had stooped over to tie his shoe, and the goat, breaking loose from Abe, made a center drive. Well, it was

funny; Mrs. Lincoln laughed and I got behind a tree and fairly screamed. But Abe looked as solemn as a judge. He was too badly scared to laugh; he thought the goat's doom was at hand. But to our surprise and gratification, Mr. Lincoln began to smile, then he said: 'I have decided to try to keep from getting mad over small matters.'

"Abe and I were lagging behind coaxing the goat, and I had begun to wish that he hadn't eaten the tail off of Mr. Kirkpatrick's coat.

"'Austin, I believe father did get a little religion during camp-meeting,' said Abe. 'He must or he'd have kicked Billy all the way back to Mr. John's. I was scared. Do you think he smells bad?' Abraham asked dryly.

"'Well, I reckon he does,' I answered. 'But mother says goats keep away certain kinds of sickness from folks and that horses and mules never get sick if a goat stays in the field with them.' "

For several days the boys were puzzled over Mr. Lincoln's friendliness toward Billy; he was seen several times to pat him on the head, and never once did he offer to kick him. But it soon developed that somebody had told Mr. Lincoln that it was good luck to own a goat. Now, Abraham's father was not super-superstitious, but he evidently believed it worth while to be a little courteous toward the goat, hoping that Billy might be the means of helping him over some of life's rough places.

CHAPTER XX

THE RESCUE

THE Rolling Fork, a tempestuous little river, separated LaRue from Nelson County. It was a most dangerous stream and numbered its victims by the hundreds. Before the bridge-building era, sign-boards at every ford warned the traveler not to try to cross over if the water was colored with mud. Those who failed to heed often paid for their stubbornness.

Thomas Lincoln was made overseer of that part of the ridge-road which led from Hodgen's Mill to the Rolling Fork, a distance of eight or ten miles. He was enthusiastic over the honor bestowed upon him by the Hardin County Court and spent much of his time riding a small

mule along the road, mapping out in his mind methods of improvement. Late one evening he came home drenched, muddy and highly excited, and announced that he had lost his mule and pretty nearly his own life. He had attempted to ford the river; the mule, a small one, could not carry his rider, and in a few moments, went down. Mr. Lincoln was hurled to the opposite side of the river, where he seized the overhanging limb of a small tree and pulled himself ashore. So outraged was he that he threatened to sue Hardin County for the loss of the mule, but when convinced that such a suit would be futile, because he had no business on the Nelson County side of the river, he dropped the matter and resigned as overseer of the road. The loss of the mule was a severe one, since it was the only work animal Mr. Lincoln possessed.

On one occasion Abraham and Austin Gollaher, with their fathers and one or

two neighbors, walked four miles to the Rolling Fork to see the high waters rushing over the lowlands and tearing through the valleys like a yellow snake.

“Austin,” Abe said thoughtfully, “that water acts like something has made it mad, and it is taking its spite out on the trees and rocks and hills. I call it the ‘Mad River.’” Then he turned his eyes away from the muddy terrifying water to the pleasanter sight of the quiet valleys that had not yet been inundated.

“Look, father, look down yonder!” he suddenly exclaimed, tugging at his father’s coat sleeve. “There’s a mule down there with something on its back, and I don’t see any man with it.”

“You are right,” said Mr. Lincoln; and the party of sight-seers hurried to the foot of the hill, forgetting the river in their eagerness to investigate the mystery of the mule.

A sack strapped to its back contained some pans and cups and a few small tools.

The pioneers were puzzled but at the same time convinced that a traveler had been caught in the current of the river and had perished. It was decided that the mule should become the property of Thomas Lincoln, if the owner could not be found, because it was first seen by Abraham. As Mr. Lincoln needed a mule, he was much elated over what he considered his good fortune and exclaimed: "The river took my mule from me, now it brings me another. God has been good to me during the past year."

"But, father," Abraham said in his quiet way, "God didn't have anything to do with your getting the mule, because the man who owned it must have lost his life in the river."

Mr. Lincoln did not like this reminder that he had gained the mule at the cost of a human life and was about to reprimand his son, but Mr. Gollaher averred that as Abe had found the mule he had a right to express himself on the subject.

"Be quiet a minute," exclaimed Brownfield, one of the now homeward bound party; "I heard somebody calling."

"Help!" came a cry from the woods.

"Shout again!" was the answer from a half dozen throats, and following the direction of the sound, the pioneers soon came upon a man propped against a tree. His clothing was wet and muddy and torn, and his face was gaunt from hunger, but the sight of kindly people around him seemed to revive him and he said in a low husky voice:

"My name is Jonathan Keith; I was caught in the current of the stream day before yesterday, in the afternoon, and I have been in the forest ever since without food or shelter. I reckon my companion and his mule were drowned."

He was informed that the mule had been found, but that there was no sign of his rider. The unfortunate man then explained that he and his friend Wilson,

both of North Carolina, were prospecting, and that when they came to the river they attempted to ride the mule across, one behind the other, but that hardly were they in the water than they were caught in a swift undercurrent and hurled to what seemed certain death. Mr. Keith said that he fought the river and its whirlpools until he reached the bank and pulled himself out, but that his companion and the mule went down.

“Then,” said Thomas Lincoln, “maybe this ain’t his mule.”

“Was the mule bareback, or did he have something strapped to him?” asked Mr. Gollaher.

“He had a sack with some cups and pans and some small tools in it, strapped to his back,” was the answer.

“Then,” said Mr. Gollaher, “the mule we found was the property of your companion, and in case of his death it should, in my opinion, fall to you, if not claimed by relatives of Mr. Wilson.”

To this Mr. Lincoln very readily agreed, and the unfortunate stranger was assisted to the Lincoln home where he was told he might remain until a search could be made for the lost companion. Several days later, the body was found in the prongs of a small tree two miles from the ford where he met death.

“Stay right here with me during the winter, Mr. Keith, and help me with my traps,” invited Mr. Lincoln, “and I will give you a share. And,” he continued, “if you will stay with me through the summer and use the mule in cultivating the crop, I will give you half.”

Keith agreed, and so became a fixture in the community. Indeed, he never left it. But Jonathan Keith was not successful as a farmer; he preferred to make baskets of willow and buckets of cedar and to do odd jobs of tinkering here and there. He and Abraham became good friends, for he too believed that the unnecessary slaughter of game was all wrong, and was

of the opinion that every boy should learn to read and write.

"Mr. Keith was a mighty good man," said Mr. Gollaher, "he was patient and kind, and all of the children in our community liked him. He taught Abe and me how to make small willow baskets, and one time we sent six or eight of them to Bardstown and swapped them for some fishing hooks and lines."

CHAPTER XXI

HONEY'S OLD MASTER

WITHIN a dozen feet of them mumbling to himself and peeping mysteriously from behind a tree stood a little man, pinched of face and stoop-shouldered, frightful to look upon. His yellow, shaggy, dog-like hair fell over his eyes and ears, and there was a scar half circling from the corner of his left eye to his chin.

The stranger's presence was inexplicable; it seemed as if he must have sprung from a hole in the ground, and Abe and Austin were both somewhat startled. The hair on Honey's back bristled; his mouth curled, and he growled through set teeth, ready for a battle royal. Instinct warned him that he faced an enemy.

"Honey, behave yourself!" com-

manded Abe when he had recovered from the first surprise. But Honey only growled the more fiercely. Abe put his arm around the dog's neck and tried to quiet him, but Honey was not so easily appeased; he had fight in him and Abe had to cling tightly to keep him from springing on the stranger.

The ugly, dirty, little man seemed bewildered, but he spoke to the dog and snapped his fingers at him in an effort to make friends, though there was no inclination on the part of Honey to be friendly.

"Go away, or he will tear you to pieces," warned Austin; but the man did not move.

"Where did you get that dog?" But before Abe or Austin could answer he continued: "I believe on my soul it's my dog Whistle, come back to life. Whistle, don't you know me? Don't you know your old master? Come to me, Whistle; I want you. I want you to forgive me."

But Honey only snapped and growled the louder.

"Where'd you get the dog? Where'd you get my Whistle?" the little man inquired pathetically.

Abe and Austin were too astonished to answer; they were quite convinced now that the man was crazy. Finally he repeated the question, and Abe replied:

"No, sir, this is not your dog; he is my dog. I found him in the road with his leg broken, and I fixed his leg and nursed him till he got well. He's my dog, and nobody can take him from me."

"Exactly, exactly," mumbled the little man. "I know now Whistle was not killed. I thought he was dead when I saw him at the foot of the cliff with blood running from his mouth, and I went away and left him. I want him back; he is my dog," the old fellow whined.

"How did Honey get hurt?"

"Well," came the shamefaced answer, "I got mad at him because he wouldn't

mind me, and I kicked him with my heavy shoe and he rolled over the cliff, and when I looked down I thought he was dead. And I felt sorry for him, and went away and left him there.”

“Then there came into Abe’s face a terrifying expression,” said Mr. Gollaher. “It wasn’t anger; it was righteous wrath, I suppose; I don’t know how to describe it. But when Abe opened his mouth and spoke, I knew there was fight and defiance in every word.

“‘If you try to take Honey away from me, I’ll make him tear you up,’ he said. ‘I’ll make him grab you by the throat. Let’s see you take him,’ and there was a blazing light in his eyes. ‘I dare you to try to put your hands on him! Here he is, take him! Why don’t you take him? You are a coward!’

“All the time Abe was speaking, Honey was growling and gnashing his teeth. The two warriors were defiant and ready for battle. I was a little frightened, but it

tickled me to hear Abe talking that way, because I had always wanted to see him fight.

“ ‘Why,’ Abe continued, ‘what right have you got to Honey? You tried to kill him; you kicked him and broke his leg and left him bleeding to death. Look at Honey’s leg now, all twisted, because you kicked him over the cliff. Why don’t you fall over a hill yourself, and break your own leg? Then you will know how Honey felt. A dog suffers when he is hurt just as much as a human. No, sir, you can’t get Honey! He would rather die than go with you, and I would rather die than let him!’ were Abe’s parting words to Honey’s old master.”

“Come on, Austin, let’s go,” said Abe, and the boys retraced their steps toward the Lincoln cabin.

“Look, Abe,” cried Austin excitedly, “that old man is following us, and he has a big stick in his hand.”

“Let him follow,” answered Abe, “fa-

ther and Mr. Keith are at home and they'll give him a thrashing if he fools with them; and anybody who treats a dog like he treated Honey ought to have a whipping."

The stranger followed close behind the boys until they reached the cabin, where with one voice they excitedly related their adventure with the dirty little man in the woods. Mr. Lincoln, who happened to be in the house, met the stranger and politely asked what he could do for him.

"I want my dog Whistle," he said, and there was a tone of demand in his voice.

"My friend," answered Mr. Lincoln, "you can't have the dog; even if I should consent I don't believe you could persuade the dog to go with you. He would tear you to pieces. He's trying to get at you now. He very likely remembers your cruel treatment."

"Well, sir," Mr. Gollaher commented, "when Abe heard his father talking that way his face fairly beamed."

"I will have him," the little man cried out, as he reached for a knife that hung from his belt.

But Mr. Lincoln was too quick for him. His arm shot out and the belligerent stranger tumbled in a knot to the ground. Then Mr. Lincoln lifted him up, and shaking him, said: "I believe you are an escaped criminal. What are you doing prowling around in this neighborhood?"

The dirty face whitened, and he began to whine and beg.

"Let him go, father," Abe put in; "let him get out of this neighborhood."

But Mr. Lincoln questioned him further, believing that the man might be wanted by the officers of the law.

"What is your right name?" asked Mr. Keith who had heard the story and watched the encounter.

"Rolling Stone," was the sarcastic answer.

"Very well," answered Mr. Keith, "we'll just roll Mr. Rolling Stone to

Elizabethtown and hold him in jail while his past record is investigated."

And so they delivered the strange little man to the jailer at Elizabethtown, who held him until it was learned that he was a harmless, half-witted rover, who never before had made trouble for any one. He had sense enough, however, to stay away from Abe and his dog, and never again to visit the Knob Creek community.

CHAPTER XXII

ROBINSON CRUSOE

“WHAT are you crying about, Abe?” Austin asked sympathetically, when he found his playmate leaning against a tree in the yard of the Lincoln home.

“I’m not crying, my eyes are just watering,” Abe answered.

“Did you get something in your eye?”

“No, Austin, I just feel bad; I feel funny down where my heart is, something keeps running up to my throat and chokes me. I guess it’s because mother talked to me this morning; she was so good to me.”

“What does she say to you, Abe, that makes you feel bad?” inquired Austin.

“Well, you see, mother talks a lot about what will become of me when she goes to the other world. She’s trying to tell me

what to do, and how to get along when she is not here any more. She never feels well, and I believe she thinks the angels are going to come after her soon and take her to God. She tells me things she wants me to do; she wants me to be kind to everybody—to father and to sister; and she wants me to try to learn something from books, so that I can either preach or teach school.” The tears were now trickling down Abe’s cheeks, and he was sobbing as if his heart was broken; he did not attempt further to conceal his tears from Austin, for by this time he, too, was weeping.

“I have forgiven that preacher who went away with my cap, because mother said she didn’t believe he aimed to steal it,” said Abe, as he wiped the tears from his eyes with his sleeves. “And you remember one day when he was preaching he said that every boy he ever knew who loved his mother and did what she told him to do, never had any trouble getting



The Gollaher home with a modern addition. The back part of the house is just as it was when the Lincolns lived in the Knob Creek Hills

along in the world; well, I believe he told the truth. I am going to try to do what I think mother wants me to do. She's the best friend I have and she's good to me, and if she should leave me I reckon I'd never be much account, because I would always be thinking about her, and wouldn't have time to study my lessons."

"I know one thing," said Austin, his tear-stained eyes snapping, "a boy's mother's better to him than anybody else; she's a heap better to him than his father, and when she whips him, she whips him easy, and when he cries she stops. Sometimes when a boy cries, and tells his father he's hurting, he won't stop. You remember the time father whipped me for talking back to old man Evans, don't you? Well, there were marks around my legs for two or three days, and when mother saw the marks she called father and told him that he mustn't whip me that way any more. And she told him, too, that old man Evans was a scamp, and that I oughtn't

to have been whipped so hard on his account, anyhow."

Abe agreed fully with everything Austin said about mothers, adding: "Mother never did whip me; she has just spanked me a few times for being slow in bringing water from the spring. And I'll tell you what," he continued, "I just can't move along fast like some boys, because I see so many little foolish things that just seem to make me stop; and I can't help it to save my life. Why, not long ago, when I went to the spring I saw a big cow snake hanging to a limb of a tree; he was almost covered with leaves and was trying his best to get to a nest of little young birds. Well, I had to get him out of the tree, and I threw at him until my arm was tired before I killed him. But when I told mother what I had been doing, she said it was all right, and patted me on the head, and told me to take all the time I needed to kill snakes and save the lives of birds. Now, you see," continued Abe, "father

wouldn't have done that way, because I reckon he wouldn't have cared if the snake got the birds. Mother said one time she made father turn a lot of turkeys loose, because he had caught too many of them. But that was when they were sweethearts, and father would then do anything she told him to, because he was afraid some other man would come along and be better to her and take her away from him."

The boys had both forgotten their sorrows by this time and Austin said:

"Let's take the billy-goat down to the creek and wash him with some lye soap."

"He won't let us wash him," replied Abe emphatically. "I tried to put him in the water yesterday, and he just tucked his head down, shoved it against me and pushed me up the hill. He won't go about water. I reckon it's a goat's nature to be like that, and you know Mr. John says it's mighty hard to change, to change—what you call it?—to change from the

way we are to something else. He says that's the reason I can't move any faster than I do."

"Then," said Austin, "let's get Honey and go down to the Nice Stone and watch the squirrels. But we won't get on top of the stone, because yesterday when I was down there it looked to me like one of those big rocks was about ready to fall."

"All right," assented Abe, "but did you know they saw some bear tracks in the mud up there by Mr. Enlow's place yesterday?"

"Yes," Austin grinned, "but bears won't bother you if you leave them alone; and besides, if one should try to get us I could shoot him. I cleaned my gun good this morning, and put a lot of powder in the load, and I believe I could hit a bear square between the eyes."

Abe blew his whistle for Honey, but the dog came rather slowly.

"He's afraid I'm going to give him back to his old master."

"Don't get close to the Nice Stone, Abe," warned Austin, "just look how loose that big rock looks."

"Honey, go find a squirrel," commanded Abe, but Honey was not anxious to go alone into the woods, and Abe had to talk to him, assuring him that all was well, and that he need not fear he would ever again fall into the hands of the man who had treated him so cruelly. Finally Honey went, reluctantly, but in a few moments came bouncing back, barking and full of excitement.

"Whenever Honey acts that way," said Abe, "there's something he sees or hears that he ain't used to. It might be that bear; so let's go back to the house and tell the folks about it."

Abe was right so many times about such matters that Austin readily agreed to follow his suggestion, and the two ran to the house and told of Honey's queer actions.

Jonathan Keith consented to go back with the boys to see if Honey had dis-

covered something unusual. About one half mile from the Nice Stone they found a man and woman camped on a knoll. The strangers greeted them with cordial salutations, and informed them that they were traveling toward Indiana, where they intended to reside. A quilt was spread upon the grass and on the quilt were two or three books. Abe's eyes fell upon them and his curiosity getting the better of him, he asked whether one of the books was named *Robinson Crusoe*.

The woman laughed and answered: "No, they are readers, and we are school-teachers. We are going to Indiana to teach."

"Why don't you stay here and teach school?" quickly asked Abe.

"Because," answered the woman kindly, "the community is not thickly settled, and we are afraid we could not get enough children in the school to pay us, my boy."

"Well," said Abe reassuringly, "I'd go

to school to you, and would do anything you wanted me to do.”

“Do you want to learn to read and write?” the woman asked.

“I can already read, and can write a little bit,” answered Abe. “I can spell hen and cat, and dog and fox, mill, horse, squirrel and some other words.”

“That’s fine,” said the woman. “Now, let me hear you spell squirrel.”

“S-q-u-r-i-l,” responded Abe hurriedly.

“You nearly had it right; try again and go slowly,” she said.

Abe studied for a moment, and then very slowly felt his way, spelling: “S-q-u-i-r-r-e-l.”

“That is fine, my boy; I would like to have you for one of my children; you’d learn quickly.”

“Please stay here,” pleaded Abe, “I want to learn to read and write. Did you ever hear of a book called *R. Crusoe*? About a man on an island, who was good to a black man he called Friday?”

"Indeed, I have," the woman answered, smiling, "I have it over there in that sack. Do you want to see it?" she asked.

Abe in his excitement, commenced to untie the sack, but soon remembered himself, and very much embarrassed, asked the woman to forgive him. She grabbed him and hugged him, then untied the sack and brought forth the copy of *Robinson Crusoe*.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Gollaher, taking up the narrative, "I see that boy's happy face right now; I do believe it was the first time I ever saw Abe so completely happy."

"Come and go home with us," begged Abe. "I want you to see my mother. We live right over there; it won't take you long. Come and stay a week and read that book to me, and some day I will pay you back," he said, looking pleadingly into the smiling face of the woman.

The man and woman accepted Abe's in-

vitation, and, after strapping their belongings to the back of their horse, the boys and their new friends repaired to the home of Thomas Lincoln. They introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, and Mrs. Lincoln gave them a most cordial welcome, saying she would be glad to keep them for an indefinite visit if she had the room.

“Mother,” pleaded Abe, “can’t we keep them long enough for Mrs. Dawson to read *Robinson Crusoe* to me? Let them sleep in the loft, and I will sleep in the stable; the fodder makes a fine bed.”

“My son, I would be glad to do this for you if we had some way to make Mr. and Mrs. Dawson comfortable,” said Mrs. Lincoln.

“Then I’ll tell you what we can do,” exclaimed Abe, pointing his long forefinger toward the west. “You all can stay at Mr. Hodgen’s. He and his mother have a big house, and there will be plenty of room there for all of us. I’ll go over with you

and tell Mrs. Hodgen that I want you to stay and she will let you, and be mighty glad, too. Now, mother, can't I go with them to Mrs. Hodgen's?" the boy begged fervently.

But Mr. and Mrs. Dawson insisted that they must proceed with their journey, that they did not feel that they could lose the time, even if Mr. Hodgen and his mother should endorse the invitation Abe had given.

"But that lad was persistent," said Mr. Gollaher, "and the Dawsons finally agreed to spend the night with the Hodgens if agreeable to them. So, with his mother's consent, Abe went with the strangers to make the introductions."

Mrs. Hodgen met them with open arms and joined with Abe in an effort to get the teachers to locate permanently in that community, but they were firm in their decision to settle in Indiana. However, they did agree to spend a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Hodgen.

Abe, of course, was invited to remain in the Hodgen home as long as the teachers would stay, and his mother gave her permission.

“Mrs. Dawson read *Robinson Crusoe* to him, and when I saw him several days later, he was feeling mighty good over his education,” said Mr. Gollaher. “I thought maybe he would get in the habit of feeling happy and would smile oftener, but he didn’t,” continued Mr. Gollaher. “I’ll tell you that boy worried me a lot because he looked sad all the time. The only way you could tell he was feeling good was when he moved around quicker or talked more than usual. But he didn’t cry any more about his mother for several days, then all at once he grew sad again, and I couldn’t get him out in the woods to play. So, finally, one day I thought I’d talk a little rough, and I said, ‘Abe, you haven’t got any sense; you just hang around the house and act like somebody’s dead, and if you don’t get out of

that way of doing I am going to get some other boy to play with me.' Well, sir, don't you know that kind of made Abe think a little bit and he never again had one of those prolonged spells of depression."

CHAPTER XXIII

SARAH'S SWING

WHEN Jonathan Keith completed the grape-vine swing for Sarah Lincoln, it was the nicest and best swing of that kind in the whole country, and there were many grape-vine swings scattered through the hills, too. Mr. Lincoln, who was something of a carpenter, made the box seat, and Mrs. Lincoln did some upholstering with a sheepskin. The grape-vines were securely looped around the box, and Mr. Keith smoothed and notched a big limb, growing high up on an oak tree which sheltered much of the Lincoln yard, and then over the smoothly-notched limb the vines were fastened, and Sarah's swing was complete.

All was ready for "the trip to the

moon," that Mr. Keith had been promising her, and Abe and Austin watched the proceedings with interest. They were anxious to be asked to take one of those delightful trips, but Sarah not even hinted at such a thing.

"I reckon we will have to build a swing of our own down on Knob Creek," said Austin.

"You boys may swing when Sarah is tired or when she has something else to do," said Mr. Lincoln, "but when she wants to make her trips to the moon, you two must wait. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered both boys.

"We are going to make us a swing down on the creek," announced Austin. "It's lots nicer down there anyhow, and Abe and I can have more fun by ourselves."

"Very well," said Mr. Lincoln. "Get the vines and I will make the box."

Sarah kept the swing going sometimes until she got dizzy-headed, and then her mother would forbid her to swing until

she felt better. It was thus through Sarah's misfortune that Abe and Austin were now and then given a chance to use that popular vehicle.

"Austin, I like to swing," shouted Abe, as Austin gave to him the needed shove. "I like it because something funny comes in my breast that takes that heavy feeling out."

"I like it too," said Austin, "because it makes me feel like I'm flying. Next summer we will build a good one down there by the Nice Stone, and then we can swing as long as we want to."

"Sarah will get tired after a while and then we can use this one," answered Abe.

But Sarah did not get tired, though she quit swinging because a very unusual and frightful thing occurred that made her afraid to go near the swing for a long time.

The little girl had climbed into the box seat, and had given a strong pull on the "starting vine," which was attached to a

small tree near by, when, with a frightful scream, she jumped from the box and fell to the ground. Abe lifted Sarah into his strong arms and held her close to his breast, while Austin ran for Mrs. Lincoln. Finally, Sarah opened her eyes and pointed toward the swing, screaming frantically.

"Come here, Abe," shouted Austin, as Mrs. Lincoln bathed her little girl's head. "That's it; there's what scared her."

In the bottom of the box seat was a huge cow snake, coiled up and blinking lazily in the autumn sun.

"Well, I'll fix him," said Austin, who frequently bragged about being a snake-charmer, and with that he reached into the box, lifted the ugly reptile out and dropped it on the ground. "Let's drag him out there in the field and let Honey kill him."

But it wasn't quite so easy as they thought, and Honey had the tussel of his life.

It was many a day before Sarah would go near the swing, so Abe and Austin used it to their hearts' content.

"Now, Austin," said Abe, "do you reckon anybody would ever accuse us of putting the snake there?"

"I would hate to think I was that mean, wouldn't you?" asked Austin.

"I don't see how some people sleep at night," continued Abe; "it looks to me like the mean things they do during the day would make such a noise in their ears that they would stay awake all night. Whenever I do something that ain't just right, I can't go to sleep for a long time, because there is a funny noise in my ears —something seems to ask: 'Why'd you do that, Abe? Why'd you do that?' "

CHAPTER XXIV

STEALING TIME

IN AN abundant corn-crop there was ease of mind and a winter's happiness for the pioneer. If he had more than enough to meet the needs of his family he was ready with a helping hand for friend or neighbor, who had been less fortunate.

When the children were old enough to toddle, they were taught that their interest in the corn-field was as great as that of the oldest member of the family. They learned early in life that the corn-crop was not being cultivated for the markets, or for the love of money, but for the necessity of the cabin home. They were taught to work and were impressed with the belief that the harder the lick, the bigger the corncake would be.

"Abe, you and Austin have done mighty good with those four rows of corn," said Austin's father, "and I think we'll have to give you extra rations for supper. I am not a bit sorry," he continued, "that Tom Lincoln and I are going halvers on that patch of corn. It appears to me, Austin, that you work better when Abe is with you. I reckon you did two rows each, didn't you?" asked Mr. Gollaher.

Austin's head dropped.

"Out with it, Austin; how many rows did you do? Tell the truth," his father commanded.

"One," replied Austin.

"What made you work so slow?" asked Mr. Gollaher. "You are quicker than Abe when it comes to play, and in everything else where getting about is required. Why did you let Abe do three rows to your one?"

"I've been feeling bad in my side, father, ever since the day I fell out of the

tree, and it hurts me to stoop," Austin explained.

"But you've been doing lots of running around since then. I think I'll have to punish you," Mr. Gollaher announced menacingly as if the punishment was going to be severe. "Now, I'll tell you what you will have to do, Austin," he went on. "You'll have to catch up with Abe. So, to-morrow morning you'll go to work before sunup and stick to it till it gets dark. You see, son, Abe's pappy and I are partners in that patch of corn, and it wouldn't be fair to let Abe do so much more of the work than you do."

"I'll get up, too, and help him, Mr. Gollaher," said Abe eagerly.

"But I can't let you do that, Abe; Austin must do his part. Can't you see, boys, that it wouldn't be fair for either one of you to do more than the other, because, as I explained, Mr. Lincoln and I are partners in the patch, and each has agreed to do his share of work."

There was no complaint from either boy over the form of Austin's punishment, each, perhaps, feeling the justice of it; but Abe was full of sadness. Austin was out early the next morning and worked hard and late to catch up with Abe, and Abe was there just a little earlier than usual, hopeful that he might find some way to help his unfortunate comrade.

"Austin," said Abe, as they were hoeing the next day, "they say crows can talk if you catch them when they are young and teach them, and that they'll follow you around like a pet chicken. Do you reckon we could catch one?" he asked.

"We can set a trap here in the corn and try," replied Austin.

After several unsuccessful attempts they captured a young crow, and Abe clipped its wings and kept it tied up until he had tamed it. He fed and petted it and tried in many ways to teach it to talk, but the crow didn't quite understand and refused to abandon his native "caw."

"It looks at me with its head turned to one side like it wants to talk, but it won't say a word," Abe declared, "and I don't believe a crow can talk unless its tongue is split like your mother said, and I wouldn't want to do that."

Abe's pets now numbered four: Honey, the crow, the goat and a pet coon. When he played around his home all four were with him, but when he went into the woods Honey only accompanied him. The coon gave him much trouble, and Abe wasn't so fond of him as he was of the crow or the goat. In fact the coon had tried to run away several times, but Honey always rounded him up and brought him back.

A few days later Mr. Gollaher made another tour of inspection.

"I have caught up," said Austin, full of enthusiasm when his father appeared.

Mr. Gollaher counted the rows and then did a little problem in mental arithmetic.

"Hold on a minute," he said; and he counted the rows again.

Abe looked at Austin, and Austin looked at Abe.

Finally Mr. Gollaher said: "Abe, you have done only six rows in three days. The first day you did three of them. It looks to me like you have been fooling away your time so Austin could catch up with you. That won't do, boys," he continued, "that's not right. I am going over to Hodgen's Mill to-morrow, Abe, and I am going to ask your pappy to let you go along with me. Then Austin can catch up with you in the right way. You boys haven't been honest with me, but I don't believe Abe should be punished because he got into trouble out of the goodness of his heart."

"What do you mean by we haven't been honest, Mr. Gollaher?" asked Abe, "does it mean stealing?"

"It's this way, Abe," explained Mr. Gollaher. "When the preacher went away with your cap he was dishonest; he stole the cap."

"Well," said Abe, "I didn't mean to steal anything from you and father when I worked slow to let Austin catch up with me, and I'm mighty sorry. But was it sure-enough stealing, Mr. Gollaher?"

"Yes, Abe; you and Austin were stealing time from your pappy and me, and, when stolen from people for whom you are working, time is just the same as money, or pelts, or caps."

Austin Gollaher, the man, said that he never forgot that lesson in honesty, and from that time on he never again failed to give his employer a full day's labor for a full day's pay.

"Austin," said Abe, "I asked Mr. Hodgen if stealing time made us thieves, and he said it wasn't *exactly* stealing, but if we kept on cheating that way we might soon come to stealing. I asked him how we could pay back what we took, and he said by working a little harder, or by doing something extra. So, let's don't go with them fishing to-morrow; let's stay

right here in the corn patch and pay them a day's work."

"I'll do it," assented Austin.

And in that way, 'Abe and Austin squared the account.

CHAPTER XXV

AUSTIN AND THE COON

WHEN the Hodgens built the four-room, two-story house, shortly after the death of Robert Hodgen in 1810, they made the rooms large so there would be no lack of space when visitors came that way; and subsequent events proved they were right since little bands of travelers were constantly asking favors of them,—a few meals and shelter for a night or two. Many who stopped temporarily were persuaded to remain permanently, and so the Hodgens' big house helped very materially to build up the community.

There was a great grove of hickory and walnut trees almost directly in front of the house, and through the grove a stream of clear spring water trickled, upon

either side of which were long stretches of orchard grass. This grove was one of the playgrounds of Abraham Lincoln, and when it was decided to build a schoolhouse and church, he urged with childish fervor that they be built in the grove. He was greatly disappointed when another site was chosen.

Since the removal of the Lincolns from Cave Spring Farm, where Abraham was born, to the farm close to that of the Gollahers, Thomas Lincoln had grown more thrifty, and took a great interest in preparation for the winter. He cut wood and stacked it; he patched the roof; he fed his pigs, and looked closer to his supply of meal. He was an enthusiastic nut gatherer, always had his pockets full of walnuts—his favorite—and frequently stopped his work to break the shells and pick out the kernels. Every week in the fall he was in the big grove with his sack which he always brought home full. In fact, he gathered so many nuts that he

could not find storage room for them in his small home, so he walled up a place under a projecting rock on a hillside back of his cabin, and there he put away many bushels in the "Lincoln nut cliff," as it was called by his neighbors.

"Austin," said Mr. Lincoln one evening, "bring your sack over in the morning, and you and Abraham may go with me to the grove after more nuts. Mr. Keith has promised me the mule, and we will bring back the sled well loaded."

While Austin was busy shaking nuts from the top of a big tree a coon appeared upon the scene, and at once showed fight. The boy was so frightened that he dropped, but luckily grabbed a limb as he was falling and held to it for dear life. Not realizing the cause of the commotion, Mr. Lincoln cried out:

"What's the matter up there? Hold tight, Austin; don't lose your head; if you fall it will kill you. 'Coon' it to the trunk!"

"I can't," screamed Austin. "Don't you see that big coon in the hollow of the tree; he's mad; shoot quick or he'll scratch me to pieces."

Mr. Lincoln saw the trouble; the rifle cracked, and an immense coon tumbled to the ground.

"That's the biggest one I have ever seen, and it's a mighty lucky thing for you, my boy, that he did not get to you," said Mr. Lincoln. "Why, that coon would have torn your head off if he could have got a square lick at you."

When Austin, who had lost no time getting to the ground, had caught his breath, he said to Abe: "Do you think it was all right to kill the coon?"

"Yes, I think it was all right," Abe answered. "I've always said it was right to kill animals and varmints and things like that when they want to fight." Then he added, a twinkle in his eye: "I guess you are worth more than the coon, even if they can't make caps out of your skin."

"Get away from that coon, Honey," said Mr. Lincoln; "his hide will go a long ways toward making me a coat."

"But, father," said Abe, "ain't you going to give the coon to Austin? He found it."

"No, he didn't," replied Mr. Lincoln; "the coon found Austin."

CHAPTER XXVI

JUST TURNED AROUND

THE sun was hanging low in the west; the hills were already steeped in shadows, and night would soon fall upon field and wood. Abraham Lincoln and Austin Golalaher were lost and facing a night in the woods. The boys had been aimlessly wandering for some time, each knowing they were lost; neither mentioning it to the other. They were hoping that something would lead them aright, and that it wouldn't be necessary for the one to frighten the other by admitting the truth; but finally, realizing the seriousness of the situation, they stopped and anxiously scanned the chain of blue hills to the east, and then looked at each other.

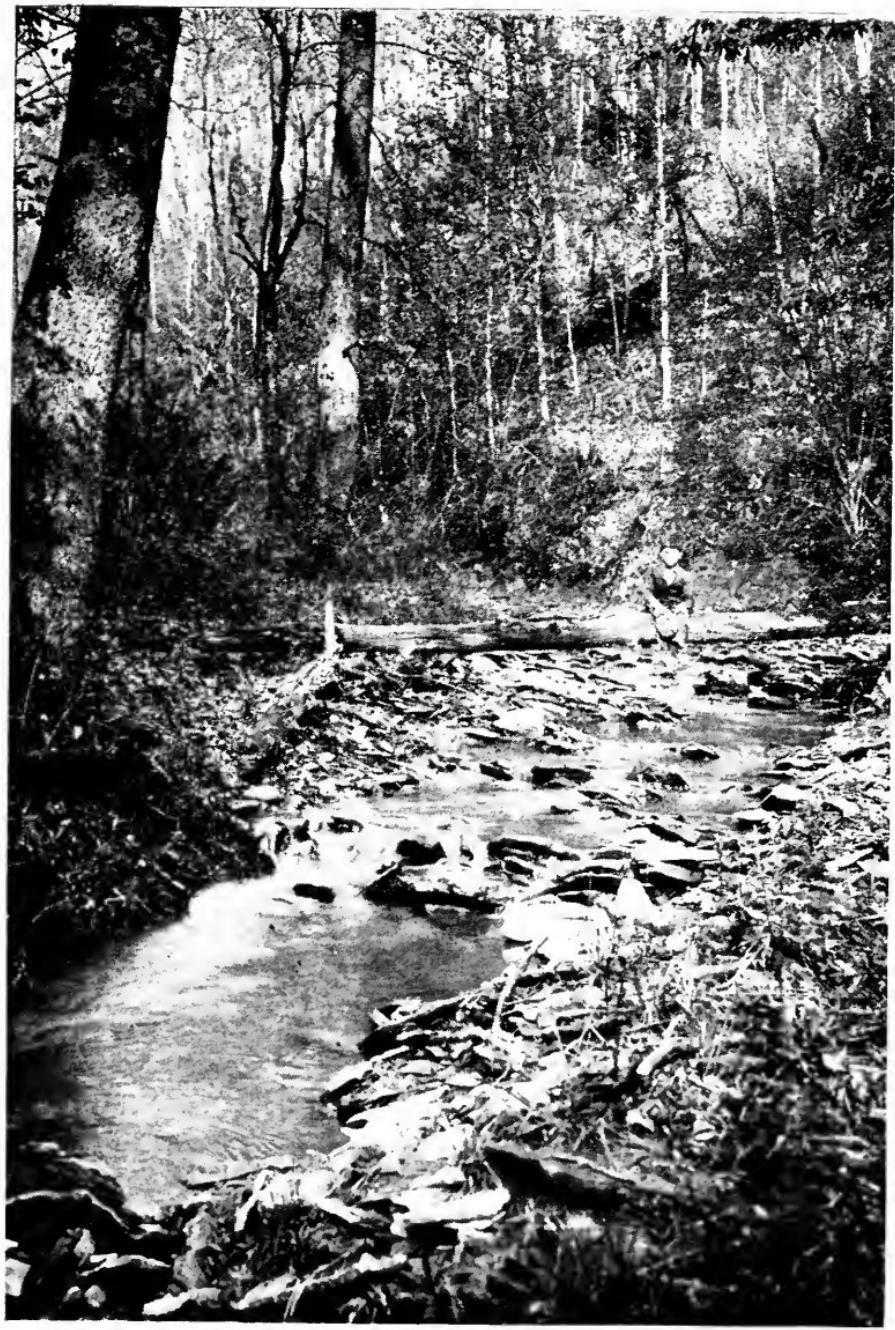
"We are just turned around, not lost," exclaimed Abe.

"I know it," said Austin, "but how are we going to get turned around right?"

"Let's don't get scared, and let's think about something," was Abe's very sensible suggestion. "Now," he said, "there is no use to travel any farther toward the hills. It seems like that's the way home, but we didn't come over the hills to get here, and we couldn't get home by going that way."

"That's so," Austin agreed, "but it seems to me if we go any other way we won't be going home. It looks like I can almost see our houses over there where the hills are. We had no business trying to come through the woods until we had been through with our fathers. But we aren't afraid," he added, "because we'll be all right if it doesn't storm and—thunder."

"If we could find Knob Creek we could get home," remarked Abe reassuringly,



Knob Creek still has its foot-logs and the children of the hills play there to-day as they played more than a hundred years ago



"because there's no place along the creek we haven't been. We'd be sure to know which way to go, too, if we could see that big tall tree that stands on the hill over there by Mr. Dawson's house. We've got to find something like that before we can get out of here. Look for a path, Austin," advised Abe, "look good," and he clapped his hands to emphasize his command, "and if we find one we'll follow it—we'll follow it over that way," and he pointed in the direction that seemed directly away from home. "Rabbits and 'possums and other animals," he said, "make paths in going to Knob Creek for water. I have heard father say that he'd followed a narrow trail lots of times in looking for water, and that he nearly always found it."

"The sun's about down," said Austin, "and before we know it, it will be black as pitch in here, and then we'll have to do like the men do when they are lost and night comes on."

"What do they do?" Abe quickly asked.

"They just stop right where they are and stay there until daylight, because it don't do any good to try to find your way when you haven't got a trail to follow. So, if we don't find something pretty soon we'll stay where we are till morning. And we must keep awake, too, and listen for the blasts from the hunters' horn and look for the torch-lights, because our fathers are sure to be out looking for us. But they won't be as scared as they were the time you were lost in the cave, because they know we are together. I wish your mother and Sarah hadn't taken Honey with them down to Mrs. Hodgen's. If Honey were here he'd know the way home."

But Abe had no intention of spending the night in the woods if his acute mind could find a way out, and he continued his search for a path in the underbrush. He examined closely every patch of

briers, every clump of bushes, getting down on his hands and knees in his eagerness to find a trail.

“Here it is!” he shouted, as the sun dropped out of sight. And when Austin joined him he saw running through the woods and the briers a well-defined path. The boys followed it at a gallop, scratching their hands and faces as they hurried through the tall briers and tangled thickets. Less than half a mile away they found Knob Creek, and were greatly surprised to discover themselves within a stone’s throw of their homes.

“Well,” said Austin, “we were ‘turned around’ right where, had we hollered loud enough, they would have heard us. The next time we’ll cut notches in the trees. Or we won’t go any more unless we take Honey with us. I reckon he’s got more sense than we have,” he laughingly concluded.

“It looked like the hills had moved to another place, didn’t it?—like they had

just covered up Knob Creek," said Abe. "We are late, and mother will be uneasy about me, but when I tell her we were lost, I reckon she'll be so glad we got home all right that she won't scold me much.

"Whenever you're lost," Abe advised Austin, as if he were much older, "just try to think about what you are doing, and don't get scared, and the most of the time you will find your way back home. That's the reason I want to learn how to read; the books tell you a lot of things—they tell you how to keep out of trouble, and if you do get in they show you how to get out."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GHOST

THOMAS LINCOLN sat in front of his backlog fire. He was picking kernels from a heap of walnuts, and was hungrily gulping them down. It was early in the evening, but Mrs. Lincoln, Abe and Sarah were in bed. The moon was shining brightly and the first snow of the season was falling. It was just the kind of night to sit by a warm fire, eat walnuts and dream, which Mr. Lincoln was doing in a highly satisfactory manner.

Suddenly there was a rap on the door, but before Mr. Lincoln had time to extend the settler's usual polite invitation, "Come in," the latch-string was silently lifted, and a "ghost" walked into the room. The thing had upon its shoulders

an ox head, and from its skeleton eyes shone flickering flames of light. Its body was robed in white, and about its shoulders was a large white sheepskin. The make-up of the creature was hideous; it was so ghastly that Thomas Lincoln stood there in the small room shivering and undecided what to do.

Abraham, who was not yet asleep, crawled noiselessly from his trundle bed, stole up behind the ghost and tipped the skeleton-head of the ox to the floor and disclosed a young woman who had but recently moved into the community, and who had a mania for playing pranks. Though Mr. Lincoln earnestly impressed on her the danger of amusing herself in such fantastic ways, she continued to frighten people until one evening she was given a whipping by two boys who failed to see the humor of her practical jokes.

“Were you afraid of the ghost?” asked Austin the next day, when Abe related the experience of the previous night.

"No, I wasn't," was the prompt reply, "but I reckon I would have been if I hadn't seen that old ox head over at her house a few days before. I asked her mother why they were keeping it, and she said her daughter used it to scare people with.

"But," continued Abe, smiling faintly; "father didn't eat any more walnuts after the ghost came, and he told mother that devilish girl kind o' made him nervous. You see, father doesn't exactly believe in ghosts, but he says he has seen lots of funny things in the woods at night, and for that reason he doesn't like to be out after dark. Once he was sure he saw an Indian war-dance. I can just barely remember one night when we lived on Cave Spring Farm, father came home nearly scared to death. He told mother he saw a giant riding a big lion through the woods, and that the lion and the man actually tore down the trees as they galloped and roared through the timber. Mother put

father to bed, and he didn't get out for a long time."

"Are you much afraid when it gets dark?" asked Austin.

"Not much," replied Abe, "because Missus Sarah says the night is just like a big room in her house that she keeps dark during the day by putting something over the window, and she asked me if I would be afraid to go into that room while it was dark, and when I told her I wouldn't she said: 'Well, that dark room is just like night, and if you are not afraid to go where I have made it dark, I know you are not afraid to go where God has made it dark.' She said the world was God's big house, and that when it got dark in the world it was because God had put something over the window."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DISTRESS SIGNAL

THE Christmas hunt one hundred years or more ago was a big event among the settlers. The hunting parties were usually made up of not more than eight or ten neighbors who were closely identified in a social way, and who loved that feature of the meet as much as they loved the sport.

When the date was finally set, the bullets molded and all preparations made, the hunters met at a given time and place, the routes were mapped out and the "stands" selected, each receiving full instructions what to do if something unlooked-for should happen. Then the men and dogs went forth into the wilderness to invade the hiding-places of the turkey,

the deer and other game which was then so plentiful in Kentucky.

The crack of the rifle was as music to the ears of the backwoodsman, and when he heard the faint muffled report of the old-time rifle, over there on the hill or down in the valley, he smiled and made a mark upon a rock or a tree. Each hunter, knowing the exact location of his comrades, kept an account of the number of shots fired, when the report was within reach of his acute and well-trained ears, and he could tell within remarkable accuracy how many pieces of game each hunter had brought down during the day, when all assembled late in the afternoon to make the count, and relate their experiences.

The aim of those hunters was unerring, and when one heard the report of a rifle it was safe to give the hunter credit for another wild creature of the forest. It was unusual to miss, and when for any reason a wild shot was made, the hunter

was greatly chagrined, for he knew his comrades of the hunt would "devil" him when they met together at the close of the day.

The hunters had signals which were obeyed implicitly. The hunter's horn was law. It was the call to duty, and every man obeyed it. There was to be no waiting, not for a moment, when that blast was sounded. It was considered of such importance that there was a standing admonition that ran something like this: "If the game is there and the gun is raised, and you hear a blast, don't shoot until you have obeyed the law of the horn."

One short blast of the horn called a certain pioneer, two blasts called another, and so on, each having a number. One long blast was the distress signal, and all who heard it went to the comrade that made it in all haste.

"Abe didn't enjoy these annual hunts," said Mr. Gollaher, "and when he was very

young, shortly after the Lincolns moved here, he expressed himself to me—with that mild convincing look upon his face that always made me feel queer—as being ‘against killing things in the woods that don’t bother you.’ Only once did he take part in an expedition.

“I shall never forget that day,” continued Mr. Gollaher; “I thought Abe was the strangest lad in the world, and I guess he was. When he heard the report of a rifle he had a way of doubling up his fists, drawing his face and shrugging his shoulders that was most peculiar. He was actually beside himself with nervousness and seemed extremely uncomfortable. Once he whispered to me: ‘I hope they won’t hit anything. If I could tell the turkeys and deer that the men are watching for them, I’d do it, so they could go into the caves and stay there till the hunt is over.’

“Upon this occasion Abe and I were permitted to take a stand with Mr. Hod-

gen. We were stationed close to a small spring which ran out of a rock at the foot of a hill. Yonder's the hill, right over there to the east—the one with the dead trees at the top," said the venerable Mr. Gollaher, with a wave of his hand. "Right at the foot of that hill we had our stand—Mr. Hodgen, Abe and I. That's the hill, and that big flat-top rock was there then as now. A clump of bushes and saplings were just in front of the rock, making a good hiding-place for the hunter.

"There had been many rifle reports during the morning and afternoon, and Mr. Hodgen had been kept pretty busy making marks on the rock. Abe had learned to count and had figured up the number of 'poor things,' as he called them, that had been killed. He asked Mr. Hodgen if he believed that every time a gun cracked something had been shot, and when the question was answered in the affirmative, Abe replied in his simple

wonderful way: ‘It’s mighty bad! It ain’t right!’

“Mr. Hodgen’s hunting horn was lying on the rock, close to the marks he had scratched, the marks Abe had been scanning—earnestly and sorrowfully from the moment the first one was made early in the morning until some time in the afternoon—when he himself brought that day’s hunt abruptly to a close.

“The weather was wonderfully mild for that time of the year, we didn’t even have to move about to keep our feet warm. Abe and I, standing just behind the rock, had our pockets full of walnuts and sweet cakes. And I at least was having a pretty good time watching for game and listening to the sound of the guns. Suddenly Mr. Hodgen crouched low behind the rock. His keen ears had caught the faint noise of an animal gliding through the forest on the opposite side of Knob Creek. I, too, had heard the sound.

“‘There it is!’ cried Abe. And there,

not more than one hundred and fifty feet away, with its head high, stood a fawn. Mr. Hodgen did not see it immediately, and before he could shoot Abe grabbed the horn and blew the distress signal. Of course the fawn skipped away and was instantly lost in the deep dark woods on the other side of the creek.

“Well, sir,” continued Mr. Gollaher, “I was mad enough to jump on Abe and give him a good licking, and I fully expected Mr. Hodgen to box his jaws, but he didn’t, he just said, ‘Why, Abraham!’ Abe made no reply; he just stood there gazing across the creek to where the fawn had stood a moment before.

“I knew, of course, Abe was in for it; I wouldn’t have been in his breeches for anything I knew of at that time; but after I got in a good humor I felt sorry for him and didn’t want to see him whipped. I’ll tell you, Abe had me conjured.

“That signal meant that all the hunters who heard it would leave their ‘stands’ at

once in answer to the call. Abe seemed very much unconcerned, except that he was sorry to displease Mr. Hodgen, and told him so, but added that he was glad he saved the life of the little fawn.

“Mr. Lincoln’s ‘stand’ was the nearest to ours, so I knew he would be there in a few minutes. I felt sure Mr. Hodgen would think Abe deserved a good whipping, and was therefore greatly surprised when he said: ‘Now, Abraham, we’ve got to do something to save you. Your father will give you a whipping, and I don’t want him to do that, because I know just how you feel about the matter. If you had only asked me not to take the life of the fawn you would have saved yourself all this trouble, for I was not anxious myself to shoot the little thing.’

“‘Just let father whip me,’ said Abe in his matter-of-fact way: ‘he won’t kill me, I reckon, and if I hadn’t blown the horn you would have killed the fawn; you couldn’t have kept from shooting it.’

“ ‘What shall I tell your father when he comes, Abe? What shall I tell him?’

“ ‘Tell him I did it. Tell him I blew the horn to save the life of the fawn,’ was Abe’s decisive answer. ‘He can whip me all he wants to and I won’t cry.’

“ ‘No,’ said Mr. Hodgen, ‘I am going to try to save you.’

“ In a few moments Mr. Lincoln came tearing breathlessly through the brush.

“ ‘What’s wrong?’ he cried.

“ ‘Oh, nothing much,’ Mr. Hodgen replied, ‘Abraham just unthoughtedly blew the horn a little louder than he intended. It’s about time we were all assembling anyhow, and it didn’t really make much difference,’ he added indifferently.

“ ‘That was a very bad thing to do, Abraham, and I will have to whip you when we get home,’ announced Mr. Lincoln.

“ ‘Tom,’ pleaded Mr. Hodgen, ‘just a light one this time. Abraham will never do it again.’

" 'I know I won't, because I am not going out with you all again,' and then he let the cat out of the bag by saying: 'I just couldn't stand to see Mr. Hodgen shoot that little deer.' "

When the full story came out Mr. Lincoln proposed to whip Abe then and there, but Mr. Hodgen protested, saying that such punishment should take place in the home, not in the open air before others; that it was too much like a public whipping.

"Well, did your father whip you very hard?" Austin asked the next day.

"Yes, he did, and he was mad because I didn't cry. The whipping didn't hurt much," bragged Abe, "I think God must have kept it from hurting—kept it from hurting much, because I saved the life of the little deer.

"Don't you know, Austin," Abe continued seriously, "God might think as much of that little fawn as He does of some people, and He might not want it

killed. How can we be sure that He doesn't want it to grow up? You know, big deers kill snakes—paw them to death, and when that little fawn grows up big and strong, he may kill a poisonous snake that might have bitten a man or woman or child and killed them. How do we know that God didn't make me blow that horn yesterday?"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Gollaher, "that was sound argument, and convinced me Abe had acted entirely within his rights. He always convinced me when he thought it worth while. He was a philosopher—a reasoner—smarter than anybody."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE KING'S LITTLE BOY

“MOTHER wants Austin to come to see Abraham,” cried Sarah Lincoln as she entered the Gollaher cabin.

“My child,” said Mrs. Gollaher, “Austin can’t go; he was bitten on the foot by a poisonous snake about an hour ago, and we have been applying chicken fat to the wound ever since to draw out the poison. Austin insists it was a harmless water snake, not a rattler, but his leg is mighty swollen and we are uneasy about him.”

“Well, I’ll declare!” exclaimed Sarah, “it’s mighty funny. Abraham cut his big toe with the ax about the same time the snake bit Austin, and we couldn’t get it to stop bleeding until mother went out

to the stable and got a lot of spider-webs and covered the cut with them.”

In the afternoon the swelling had left Austin’s leg, and he announced: “I’m going over to see Abe, and tell him to get his pappy to chew up a lot of tobacco and put on the cut place and it will be well by morning.”

When he reached the cabin Abe greeted him with: “Why didn’t you kill the snake, Austin?”

“He got away from me,” Austin admitted. “He crawled into a hole in the bank of the creek. I thought he was asleep, and just for fun I tried to grab him back of the head with my toes,—and he wasn’t asleep. His head shot out and he bit me. That’s what made father think it was a rattler; they snap that way. But water snakes do too when they’re feeling good. How’s your toe?”

“It’s getting all right since mother put cobwebs on it.”

“You’d better have somebody chew up

some tobacco and put that on it; it'll heal in a hurry then," advised Austin.

"It's too bad," Austin went on; "we were going to the mill to-day, and Mr. John will wonder why we didn't come, unless some of the folks go and tell him what has happened."

"It might have been a heap worse for us if we had gone to the mill. Something might have happened to us going or coming. You can't tell. But I'll be mighty glad," Abe continued seriously, "when I get old enough to wear shoes the year round—old enough and make money to wear shoes in the summer time."

"You may never get old enough to do that, Abe," said Austin discouragingly. "There are lots of old men and women around here that go barefooted the year round, and I reckon we would have if the old man who works for Mr. Hodgen hadn't made the shoes for us last winter. You ought to be glad you didn't have your shoes on when you cut your foot; your

toe will heal up, but the shoe would have been ruined."

Abe smiled at this and asked Austin if he'd like to hear a story about a king's little boy in a far-off land. Austin settled himself to listen and Abe began:

"Mother said her aunt told this story to her when she was a little girl, so you see it is a long time since it happened, and the king and his little boy have been dead for a hundred years. Well, this king's little boy had a twisted foot, and because he wasn't straight and active like other boys his father didn't like him and was always slapping him and mistreating him. One day some travelers were passing through the country and among them was a beautiful little boy with long golden curls. When the king saw him he wanted to take him into his castle and pretend to the people that this was his own child; and he wanted to have him learn a lot of things from books so that the boy might become king when he died. So he swapped his

little boy with the twisted foot for the poor little boy who belonged to the travelers, and he gave them a lot of gold besides. The king's little son was old enough to know that he had been traded by his father because his foot was twisted —because he was ugly and big and kind of rough, just like you and me, Austin. So he kissed his mother good-by and told her he would come back to see her some time.

"Well, he worked with his foot, pulling it and pressing down upon it, never minding the pain, trying to straighten it. One day he hired a man to make two boards to fit around his foot, giving to the man some beads that his mother had given him, and then he got the man to wrap the boards tight around his foot. He suffered day and night, but he kept on having the boards drawn tighter until by the time he was a young man his foot was straight. Then he was determined to be a great soldier, and get together a lot of soldiers and go back to visit his mother,

and kill his father, and take his place as king. He soon had a big army, and with it he marched to the land of his father! When he got there he sent word to his father that he had come to kill him and take his place as king.

“When his father learned what was to be done he was badly scared and sent for his son to come to see him. The son went to his father’s castle, and his father begged him not to kill him, but the son said that was why he had come, and he would have to do it. Then the soldier’s mother came in and begged him to spare his father’s life. He finally said: ‘All right, mother, for your sake I will not kill him.’ Then he sent his messenger out to where his army was camped and ordered those travelers who traded their boy to his father to be brought to the castle. In a little while they were there. Then the king’s son said to the king: ‘Get off of your throne.’ And the king obeyed. ‘Now,’ said the soldier, ‘you see my

twisted foot is straight, and with it I will kick you out of this castle.' The soldier then began to kick the king, and he kicked him down the long steps out to the street, and there he met the same travelers and he said to them: 'Now you must take my father and you must treat him just as you treated me, and after you have kept him as long as you kept me, you may bring him back here. If, when you bring him back, he has a twisted foot, I will make him king again in my place and I will leave the country. If he will work as hard to twist his foot as I worked to straighten mine, he may be successful.'

"How do you like that story, Austin?" Abe asked.

"It's a good story," exclaimed Austin, "but what became of the pretty little boy the traveler left with the king?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's only a story, and even if it was true, the boy's dead for a hundred years I reckon, so it makes no difference about him."

CHAPTER XXX

TWO PRAYERS JUST ALIKE

“I BELIEVE that’s Joel Walters’ house burning,” said Thomas Lincoln, as he and the Gollahers watched the bright light of a distant fire.

“It’s exactly in their direction,” replied Mr. Gollaher. “We better do a little investigating; and I guess it would be well to take Abe and Austin along. They might be of some help.”

They set out at once for the top of the hill back of the Lincoln cabin, for from there they would have a better view of the fire.

“It certainly is Joel’s house,” exclaimed Mr. Lincoln.

“Yes, I am sure of it now,” replied Mr. Gollaher; and they ran on down the slope

of the hill into the deeply wooded valley beyond.

"That's not Mr. Walters' house," Abe said, as he and Austin fell a little behind the others.

"Then, if it ain't, why don't you tell the men, so's we can all go back home?" said Austin impatiently. "It's sprinkling rain right now, and I don't want to be caught out here in a storm."

"You tell your father," said Abe, "and I'll tell mine."

When they had begun to climb the next hill, Abe ran to his father and said: "That's not Mr. Walters' house."

"How do you know?" queried Mr. Lincoln.

Everybody stopped to hear Abe's explanation.

"Because it's not in the right place."

"It certainly is in the right place," said Mr. Lincoln, and Mr. Gollaher nodded his head in approval.

"I'm sure it's not," contended Abe.

"Why are you so sure, Abe? How do you know?" asked Mr. Gollaher.

"I'll tell you why. You all know the tall poplar tree on top of the hill there by our house?"

"Yes," answered both men rather impatiently.

"Well, sir, in the winter when all of its leaves are off, that tree looks just like it was leaning against the smoke coming out of Mr. Walters' chimney; it looks that way when you come up the path toward it. To-night I sighted that tree against the fire, and the fire was way off from it—way over there," and Abe pointed to the right.

"Did you ever see such a boy in all your life!" exclaimed Mr. Gollaher; "and I'll bet my buttons he's right, too."

It was only a short distance to the top of the hill they were on and when they reached it, Thomas Lincoln, somewhat out of humor, said: "Abraham's right; but I don't see why in the mischief he didn't

tell us before we came all the way over here. But if it isn't Walters' house burning, what is it?"

"I'll tell you what it is," said Abe. "Don't you remember over at Mr. Hodgen's that day we all had dinner there that Mr. Walters said he was going to burn the hollow trees on his place? He said he was going to do it because the wild animals and varmints that catch chickens live in hollow trees. I remember because I thought he oughtn't to."

"You are right," said Mr. Lincoln. "Joel shouldn't have done it. Such game is leaving the country too fast, anyhow."

"Why didn't you tell us, Abe?" asked Thomas Gollaher, as they were retracing their steps through the woods, "why didn't you tell us we were on a wild goose chase?"

"I was afraid to," Abe answered.

"What were you afraid of?"

"I was a little afraid it might be Mr. Walters' house. Then if we hadn't gone

to help him he'd never have liked me again; he'd have thought I didn't want to come and help them out of their trouble."

Thomas Gollaher laughed heartily at this very sensible answer and said: "Tom, you have a mighty smart boy in that youngster."

A little farther on Austin said excitedly: "I hear water roaring."

"So do I. It's Knob Creek," replied Abe.

"Father," said Austin, "I believe Knob Creek's up, and we won't be able to cross it."

"Look-a-here, Jonathan," Mr. Gollaher called to Mr. Keith, "I believe the boy's right. It looks like we've been cut off from home. It hasn't rained here to amount to anything, but I reckon the waters above have flushed the stream so we can't cross that foot-log."

It was true. The little mountain stream had risen rapidly and was now rippling over the foot-log, making it dan-

gerous to cross, as the water at that point was very swift, although not more than waist deep.

By this time it was raining pretty hard and the men realized it would be useless to attempt to reach their homes that night. So they hallooed to their families and sought shelter in a cliff high above the water, to await the pleasure of Knob Creek; but the little stream continued to climb so that by daybreak it had spread completely over the lowlands, while the heavy clouds continued their downpour.

Noon came, the creek continued to rise and there was no sign that the rain would cease in time for the channels to empty themselves before night, so the party decided to take refuge in the home which, the night before, they thought was burning. They were given a hearty welcome by Mr. Walters and his family, all of whom laughed heartily when they learned how their friends happened to be in their present predicament.

“If I’d known the burning of those old hollow trees was going to get my neighbors into all of this trouble,” said Mr. Walters, “I would have left them for the weasels and foxes.”

“Austin,” said Abe, when the two were preparing for bed in the little loft over the Walters’ kitchen, “do you ever say your prayers?”

“Sometimes I do and sometimes I don’t,” answered Austin, yawning. “Do you say yours?”

“Yes, every night.”

“Well, I guess I would, too, if I knew what to say. What do you say, Abe?”

“I’ll tell you mine, and you can remember and say it; then God will be getting two prayers just alike. I just say:

“God help mother, help father, help sister, help everybody; teach me to read and write, and watch over Honey and make him a good dog; and keep us all from getting lost in the wilderness. Amen!”

CHAPTER XXXI

TELL THE TRUTH

“AUSTIN,” said Abe, “I’ll be mighty glad when I can have my own big ax. This would be a good place right here to put up a schoolhouse. Don’t you reckon we could clean it up, and help the men to build a schoolhouse?”

“I don’t know, Abe. And if we had a schoolhouse, who would teach school?”

“You remember Mrs. Hodgen always said we ought to have the cage ready before we catch the bird, and I believe we should have the schoolhouse built before we try to get a teacher. If Mrs. Hodgen keeps on teaching me and I keep on learning I could teach a little myself.”

Austin laughed at this and teased a little.

"That's all right," retorted Abe, "I could teach you some things now. I can spell a lot of words, and can count up to a hundred. I wish you would try to learn something about reading and writing and spelling and figuring."

"Don't want to learn," Austin replied, "because it wouldn't do me any good. I don't expect to be a preacher or a teacher, and what good would it do for me to learn things like that?"

"Some of these times," answered Abe, "you might want to sell a cow or a pig, and you couldn't count your money; or you might want to write something on a tree, and you couldn't do that either. If you would let me teach you what I know now, by the time you learned that I'd know more; so, you see, there would always be something I could teach you."

They were building a new ridge-road to Elizabethtown. The settlers of that section were working toward Hodgen's Mill, and those of Hodgen Mill were working

toward Elizabethtown, each crew hoping to meet the other half-way between the two places before bad weather set in.

Abe and Austin kept the road-builders in their vicinity supplied with water from the hill spring. Each carried a cedar bucket and gourd, and were required to pass the water frequently as the heat was intense. Whenever they found opportunity, the boys would take an extra ax and slash at one of the smaller trees.

(“Abe was a natural-born chopper,” said Mr. Gollaher, “and I must admit he could beat me at that kind of work, although he was a good deal younger than I. But he was larger,—he was the biggest boy in Kentucky for his age—biggest in body and mind.”)

“Come here quick!” Austin called to Abe, “I’ve cut my foot, and I’ve cut it mighty bad, too.”

Austin was panic-stricken, but Abe said very quietly: “It ain’t cut half as bad as mine was the day the snake bit you. Take

that moccasin off and we'll fix it. We'll go to the spring, wash the blood off and wrap your foot up in a piece of your shirt-tail."

"I don't want mother to find out about this," Austin said, after Abe had fastened the bandage. "I don't believe I'll limp when I get home, and then she won't ever know anything about it."

"Yes, she will," said Abe. "because part of your shirt-tail is gone."

"That's so," Austin admitted. "Well, I'll tell her Honey grabbed me and tore it with his teeth."

"No, sir-ee, you won't!" said Abe emphatically. "You can't 'story' on Honey. You'll just have to tell your mother the truth. She won't whip you; she never does. What are you afraid of?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Abe, I've been bragging about being a good chopper, and I don't want them to laugh at me."

"But you must tell the truth about that shirt-tail. Your mother won't be mad

when she knows you might have bled to death if we hadn't tied up your foot right away."

"Mother's going to be mad," insisted Austin, "because just the other day she said she believed I'd have to have another shirt before spring, and she told father he must try to get some goods next time he went to Elizabethtown or Bardstown."

"I'll tell you what your mother can do," suggested Abe. "She can make a new tail to your shirt out of the hide of the wildcat you killed the day we were fishing."

That suited Austin, and he wrapped his moccasin about the injured foot and hurried to the spring to get another bucket of water for the roadbuilders.

Abe patted Honey's head and said: "No, Honey, I won't let Austin or anybody fib on you." Then the boys, answering the call for "more water," climbed again to the top of the hill.

"Austin, they say there's a big book

somewhere that tells all about wrapping up cuts and sores, and about giving medicine made of herbs to sick people. If we had that book and could read it, we could learn a lot about such things, and would know what to do the next time we get hurt. And that's one reason you ought to learn to read," concluded Abe.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RIGHT TO FIGHT

CORN-SHUCKING and house-raising parties would not be popular to-day unless each "guest" was well paid for being present. But in Kentucky one hundred years ago, such invitations were accepted with pleasure. The women, as well as the men, attended these corn-shuckings, and after the work was done, fiddles were brought forth and the dancing began. "Matches" were made between the boys and girls, and there used to be a saying that the girl who couldn't find a husband at a corn-shucking social wasn't worth shucks—that if she couldn't go from the shucks to the dance, and from the dance to the marriage altar within a month, she would be an old maid.

When a pioneer wished to build a new house, or an addition to his old one, he usually spent several weeks in felling and hauling logs. Then, allowing a few days for mishaps and delays, he sent word to his neighbors that upon a certain day he would give a house-raising party. At the appointed time the good friends would be on hand.

They were building a cabin for a newly-married couple who had recently removed from Virginia and bought some land from Thomas Gollaher's father—Austin's grandfather. Abe and Austin were allowed to go to the party, that they might have some primary training in the business of house-raising. During the day a fight occurred between two of the men, following a stormy dispute over the date of a certain battle in the Revolutionary War. Abraham watched the struggle with little apparent concern, as he sat upon a log, his chin resting in his hands. When asked by an old man if he was not

afraid the men would hurt each other, he very indifferently said he wasn't.

"And why?" asked the old man.

"Because," answered Abe, "they have no business fighting. If they had waited until they got home their wives could have settled the question; the women keep dates of such things set down in writing, and besides, there wasn't any need to fight about the big war which was over so long ago. I wouldn't have cared very much if they had bloodied each other's noses."

Now, Abraham was no doubt mistaken as to the women having "set down in writing" the dates of battles of the Revolution, but the women-folk of the back-woods were the historians, and they kept rather complete diaries, recording events as told by the people or obtained from borrowed papers and books. These diaries were current, also. Deaths, marriages, births and many other important events were recorded, and "mother's book

of things,"' as it was called, was often referred to in settling disputes.

Abraham had no patience with men or boys who tried to settle their differences by personal encounters. He did not think that "fist-and-skull" fighting, as they called it, should be resorted to, unless one had to "hit" to keep from being "hit."

"Austin, let me tell you something," he said after the men had been separated, "there is no use in fighting over dis—dis—(what do you call it?) dis—putes. There's always somebody who can tell which one is right and which one is wrong. All they have to do is to wait a little while until they can find a book, or get Missus Sarah to tell them."

"But just suppose, Abe, somebody calls you a bad name; then what are you going to do about it?"

"Just let him alone; if you hate the boy it's best not to hit him."

"Why?" asked Austin.

"Because if you don't he'll go from bad

to worse, and will finally be whipped at the public whipping post; but if you gave him a good pounding it might cure him,'" was Abe's characteristic reply. "Do you know, Austin, what the public whipping post is? It's a post where they tie bad men and thieves and whip them where everybody can see the whipping; and they say after a man is whipped at the public whipping post he has to leave the country, for from that time on everybody will make fun of him."

"Who whips him?" asked Austin.

"The law—the law gives some man the right.

"I don't believe in fighting if it can be helped," Abe went on. "You remember the day father hit old Mr. Rolling Stone; well, father had to hit him because he was fixing to cut father with a knife. I'd have fought old Mr. Rolling Stone myself that day he wanted to take Honey away from me; I'd have fought him and whipped him, and I'd have had the right

to do it. You have a right to fight to keep what belongs to you, and to make people give up what doesn't belong to them; but I think it's mighty wrong to fight over little disputes.

"I'm glad they let us come over here to-day," said Abe on the way home that evening; "I've learned a lot more about getting the logs notched for putting them together, and I can help with that church and schoolhouse they are talking about building over here on Knob Creek."

"And I'm glad, too," said Austin, "because I've been wanting to see a fight for a long time."

CHAPTER XXXIII

ABE'S DREAM

THE women-folk who lived near Knob Creek met there twice each month during the spring, summer and fall to do the neighborhood washing. A slanting rock was used for a wash-board; limbs of trees were stripped of their bark and the clothing spread over them to dry. The women-folk gossiped and on one occasion even told their dreams.

"Don't tell your bad dreams before breakfast," advised Joel Walters' eldest daughter. "You know I dreamed Aunt Mary Kastor was dead, told it before breakfast, and within a week we buried her. I wouldn't tell another bad dream before breakfast for anything."

Mrs. Keith (Jonathan Keith had now

married a Miss Brownfield, and had built a cabin so close to the Lincolns' that they could talk from one to the other) related a dream of a man drowning in the Rolling Fork River, and said: "I woke Jonathan in the night and told him of the dream. And just three weeks after that they found a man's body, all covered with mud, on the bank of the river."

Mrs. Gollaher then told in detail a dream that had greatly impressed her. She had dreamed that gold had been found by the wagon-load back in the hills, and people were rushing there from everywhere with picks and shovels, and that heaps of the yellow ore was being hauled by her house every day. The dream was so real she believed there might be gold in the hills, and sometimes she wanted to go see for herself. She said that in her dream President James Madison had come from Washington City and was overseeing the work of getting gold out of the hills; he said he was going to use it

to pay for building roads from one end of the country to the other. "Then," she added laughingly, "I was awakened by a loud clap of thunder."

Abe, listening with wide-eyed interest, asked Mrs. Gollaher if she believed there was anything in dreams.

"Yes," she replied, "but you and Austin mustn't look for gold in that hill, because you might get lost."

"I don't want any gold," answered Abraham. "The reason I asked you if you believe dreams come true, was because I once had a dream which I have been thinking about a heap."

"Then," said Mrs. Gollaher, "we want to hear your dream. What was it about?"

"Was it about your sweetheart?" asked Mrs. Keith.

"No, ma'am; I haven't got any sweetheart. I did have one, but she said my feet and hands were too big, and my legs

and arms too long, and that she liked the Evans boy better than she did me; so Susie—Susie Enlow don't like me any more."

"Too bad, Abe," said another woman; "but we want to hear about your dream. What was it?"

"Well," said Abe, "my dream was about making a speech to a lot of people in a big town, and——"

Here the boy was interrupted by a frightened scream from one of the children and the general commotion that followed. A large water snake had wrapped itself about the little girl's leg. Austin, the snake-charmer, tried his wiles, but the reptile wouldn't charm, so he seized it by the head and beat it to death upon the rocks.

When the excitement was over they tried to get Abe to finish his dream, but he just shook his head and said: "There wasn't much more to it."

"Do you ever expect to make a speech to a lot of people in a big town?" asked Mrs. Gollaher with a smile.

"I don't know, I might," Abraham replied.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OFF THE SHEEP'S BACK

"ABRAHAM, do you see how heavy the wool is on those sheep over there?" asked Mrs. Hodgen, as the two were strolling through a grove on the Hodgen farm.

"Yes, ma'am, the white sheep look like big snowballs and the black sheep look like burnt backlogs."

"Well," continued Mrs. Hodgen, "I'm going to make you and Mr. John each a suit of clothes out of that wool, and knit you some socks, to keep you warm next winter."

"It will take almost as much wool to make a suit for me as for Mr. John," said Abraham. "Just look how long my arms and legs are. They are growing twice as fast as Austin's. If I keep on growing

taller, I'm afraid I'll have to live out-of-doors. Father said the other day that by the time I was fifteen he'd have to cut a hole in the roof for my head to stick through—when I was sitting down."

"You mustn't let people tease you about your long legs and arms, Abraham. Don't you know if your arms are longer than those of other men you'll be able to reach farther?

"Suppose a fairy should hang a bag of gold high in a tree, and would say to the boys of your age around here, 'The first boy who reaches the bag of gold, without tiptoeing or jumping, may have it.' Don't you know you would get it? And maybe God gave you long legs so you could travel faster toward success when you are older.

"You must stop worrying and feel that you were made that way so you could reach big things with your hands and step over perplexing things with your feet. Anyhow," she continued, "we'll make

those two suits of clothes. You must ask your mother to let you spend a week with me so we can shear the sheep and get the wool ready to spin.”

It was fun for Abraham and he worked faithfully with Mrs. Hodgen until the new suits were made. The breeches turned out to be three or four inches too long, but when Mrs. Hodgen insisted on cutting them off, he said: “No, they’ll be just right next month.”

“Where did you get your new suit, Abe?” asked a boy at the mill a few days later.

“Mrs. Hodgen cut it off the sheep’s back and gave it to me,” he answered.

“Yes,” said Mr. Hodgen, “mother gave Abe that suit and Abe gave me this one.”

“No, sir,” Abe quickly corrected, “Missus Sarah gave it to you.”

“Didn’t you help Missus Sarah shear the sheep, spin the wool and weave the cloth?”

“Yes, sir.”

"Well, don't you think your services are worth the suit you received?"

"A boy would have to work a whole year for a suit like that," replied Abe.

"You must learn to charge what your services are worth," Mr. Hodgen insisted. "Some men would work you a lifetime, if you would allow it, and wouldn't give you a pair of socks. I say you earned your suit of clothes."

Abraham made no answer—just grinned. But later in the day he said to Mr. Hodgen, "I reckon you're right about some people letting you work a lifetime and not giving you anything for it, if you didn't make them. You know that old man who works for Mr. Evans? Well, I asked him one day, when he was looking so hungry, if Mr. Evans gave him three meals a day. He said, 'Yes, when I work all day he gives me three meals, but when it rains and I can't work, he won't even give me my supper.' "

CHAPTER XXXV

THE HUMAN TREE

A DEAD tree upon the summit of a high hill is often so shaped by the storms of years that, with the aid of imagination, it may come to resemble a huge human form; and its shadow against the sky often fills the superstitious with awe.

There were a few people in the Knob Creek section who believed the signs they read in the dead trees on the hills. To their distorted fancies the limbs of such a tree might point in one direction to-day, and in another the next. If one limb pointed south, that meant in winter that the weather was to be mild; if in summer the heat was to be excessive. It was an ill omen if a limb pointed skyward. It meant there was to be a death in the com-

munity, and the people who believed in these predictions began to give more attention to their prayers and their church duties.

Thomas Lincoln was not without his superstitions. It is related that once, when on his way to visit a neighbor, he saw a red bird and a black bird in the same tree and that he immediately abandoned his journey and returned to his home and his "beautiful Nancy." He had been told, and he believed, that the two birds—the red and the black—when together, foretold dire disaster to the community—bloodshed and sorrow.

Thomas Gollaher used to plague Mr. Lincoln about his red-bird, black-bird sign, but he quit when Mr. Lincoln discovered that Mr. Gollaher would go two miles out of his way to keep from meeting a white mule before noon on Friday.

Some five miles from the Lincoln and Gollaher homes, on the tallest peak of Muldraugh Hill, stood the huge white

trunk of a dead tree. Every limb except two large ones, and every bit of bark had been stripped from the tree by Old Father Time, and it stood like a ragged sentinel keeping watch over the valleys for miles around. The two remaining limbs resembled nothing so much as big, brawny arms, while an immense knot looked not unlike a human head. This ghost of the woods could be plainly seen from the surrounding hills, and there were more than a few people had faith in its warnings and belief in its predictions. The more simple-minded would climb the hill to commune with the old white trunk whose spirit had passed on and to bring home with them tales which opened wide the children's eyes and sent them creeping fearfully to bed.

"It is said," related Mr. Gollaher, "that on one occasion old man Pottinger came home quivering with excitement and announced that the tree was smoking a pipe, a great stream of fire coming from

its mouth, and that its head was as high as the clouds. He believed the end of the world had come, and begged that the neighborhood be notified, so that every one might pray before the final collapse. He was a maniac," said Mr. Gollaher, "and they had to tie him to his bed and keep him there until he died. Another fellow had such faith in the tree that he obeyed its 'orders' under all circumstances. Whenever he thought one of the arms pointed north, he was sure that winter would soon set in; on one occasion he even gathered his perishable vegetables in July, fearing a frost would come."

"Abe," said Austin, "let's climb up the hill and look for the human tree. I don't believe it's there," Austin went on, when Abe had consented to go. "I reckon since old man Pottinger went crazy God has blown it down."

"It's too cloudy," suggested Abe. "The tree is still there, and we can see it as soon as the sun comes out. There it is now,

with its arms pointing over that way, and over that way (one to the east, the other to the west), just like it pointed the last time we saw it.”

“Do you believe in it?” Austin asked.

Abe was looking down into the valley below them and said: “Mr. Keith has six sheep down there, Austin, and they’re getting big and fat.” Then to Austin’s question he answered very emphatically, “No.”

“Look at its arm pointing over the hill; that ain’t the way it pointed the last time we saw it!” exclaimed Austin, much excited. “I believe that arm is pointing to a hill that’s got gold in it—the gold mother dreamed of and told us about that day down on Knob Creek. What do you say to going over there some time to hunt for it? What color is gold, Abe?”

“Yellow.”

“It’s red or yellow, I don’t know which. Will you go with me some time?”

“Somebody would have to go with you

because you don't know what gold looks like. Why don't you get Mr. Hodgen to show you some of it? He has plenty."

"Let's go to-morrow," pleaded Austin.

"I won't go at all," said Abe with a tone of finality; "I don't want any gold."

"You're afraid," accused Austin.

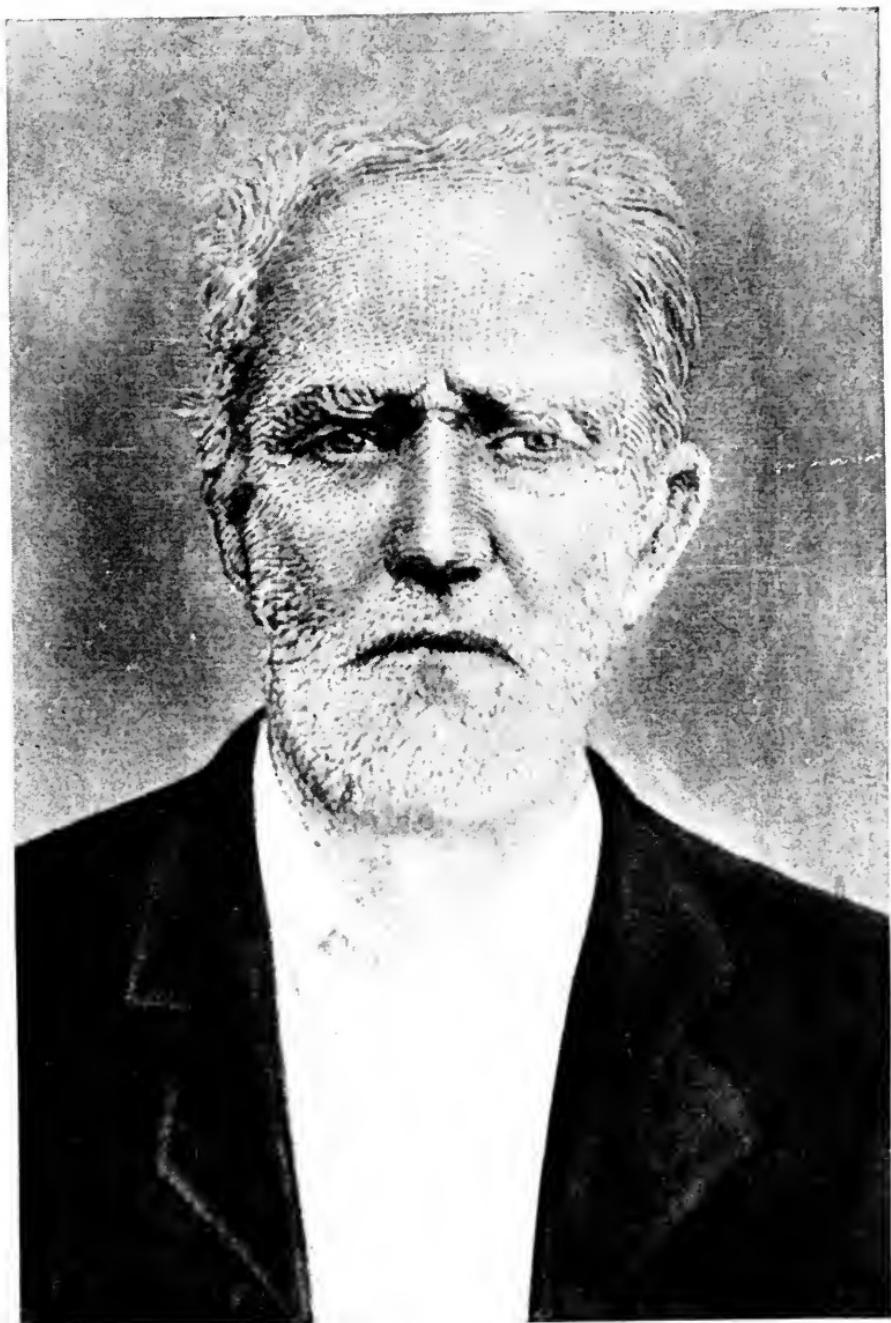
"No, I am not," Abe answered quietly; "but I don't want gold. What could I do with it?" he asked in all seriousness.

"I'll tell you one thing you could do with it," suggested Austin. "You could send to Bardstown and buy that book you've been wanting so long. What's the name of it?"

"*R. Crusoe*," answered Abe. "I will get that anyhow, pretty soon. Mrs. Hodgen is going to have it brought to me the next time any of the men take a flat boat of hides to Louisville."

"I want you to read part of it to me, Abe, when you've learned to read it."

"Why don't you want to hear all of it?"



Austin Gollaher, Lincoln's boyhood friend and playmate

"I just wanted to find out why Mr. Crusoe didn't name Friday 'Saturday'!" Austin answered, grinning.

After a moment's silence: "There might be a bear over there," said Abe meditatively.

"See!" replied Austin quickly, "*I knew you were afraid.*"

"I'll go with you if our mothers will let us," and as he spoke Abe turned to the path leading home.

"Why, Abe, you know they won't let us go. We'll have to slip off if we go at all."

"I won't do that. It's too far to go without telling them where we are going. If they said we could go, and we got lost, they would know about where to look for us. Anyhow, there's no gold over there, Austin, and if you keep on believing in that old tree, they'll have to tie you to your bed when you get old just like they did old Mr. Pottinger. I don't believe in that tree at all," Abe continued. "If I

wanted to believe in a tree I'd choose a big live one with leaves on it. I might see something in that to help me know whether it's going to be hot or cold, or whether it will rain or snow. But a *dead* tree can't tell you anything."

"A few days after this conversation," said Mr. Gollaher in relating the story, "some one in our neighborhood reported that the body of a man, badly mutilated, had been found at the foot of the very hill that I wanted Abe to visit with me. At first it was thought that the man had been attacked by a hungry bear, but it developed later that he had been shot through the head, perhaps by his own gun, and his body mutilated by small animals. That was the last time I ever asked Abe to search for gold.

"Abe didn't care for money," continued Mr. Gollaher. "He'd have given the whole hill of it for that book, *R. Crusoe*."

CHAPTER XXXVI

WHERE IS INDIAN ANNER

ABE arose from the split log bench in front of the Hodgen home. "Let's go in the house a minute, I want to ask Missus Sarah something."

"She's busy putting up berries," objected Austin, "and we oughtn't to bother her now."

Abe paid no attention to this, but, looking very solemn, walked leisurely up the narrow path to the house, Austin following.

"For goodness' sake, Abe," Austin exclaimed, "don't you ever get tired of feeling bad?"

Abe made no reply.

"Here, boys," said Mrs. Hodgen, "is

some bread and jam I was just fixing for you.”

“Missus Sarah,” asked Abe presently, wiping the jam from his mouth, “where is Indian Anner?”

“I don’t know, Abe, I never heard of it. Why do you ask?”

“Because father keeps talking about going there to live, and mother don’t want to go and neither do I.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Hodgen, laughing heartily, “you mean Indiana. Well, Indiana is several miles from here. You have to cross a big river called the Ohio before you get there. That river separates Indiana from Kentucky just like the Rolling Fork separates this county from Nelson County.”

“The Ohio—the Ohio River,” Abe repeated. “Wasn’t it close to that river that father’s father was killed by the Indians?”

“Yes, your grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, was killed there, and your uncle,

only a little boy, shot and killed an Indian just as he was ready to strike your father with a tomahawk."

"Abraham Lincoln," said Abe meditatively, "I was named for him and for Mr. Abraham Enlow, too. I'm named for two men; maybe that's what makes my name harder to spell than Austin's," he said dryly. "I don't want to go, Mrs. Hodgen, but if father makes mother go, I'll have to go, too. We've got everything cleaned up around here, and now we'll have to clean up over there. We've got our schoolhouse done and the church nearly finished, and what more do we want? But father says big game is getting scarce around here, and I reckon he thinks there's more of it across the Ohio River. I wish he'd go in partners with Mr. Gollaher raising corn, and stay here."

"Don't you remember what the preacher said, Abraham, that everything is for the best?" asked Mrs. Hodgen.

"Yes, ma'am. Parson Gentry said that over in the Church of Maple Trees, but I would have to study over that a long time before I could believe it; it sounds mighty funny to me," and the boy shook his head.

"Let's go look for that coon Mr. Hodgen was telling us about," said Austin.

"We'd better get our meal and go home; it's too late now, and anyway I'm not going to let Honey kill a coon," said Abe in that tone of finality which Austin understood so well. "I'm feeling funny down where my heart is, and I want to swing in Sarah's swing and see if I can't blow some of this lump out of my throat."

The two lads trudged silently along the narrow road for some distance, then Abe began:

"You know, Austin, if we go to that place across the big river, I'll never get back. It's hard to get across Knob Creek sometimes, and I know I could never cross that big river; so when I tell you good-by

I reckon I'll never see you again. I'll give you the crow and the coon, and maybe I'll give you the goat. But I'm going to take Honey. Now, Austin," and Abe spoke very slowly, "you tell your father to tell mine that if he'll stay here, your father will help him with his crops every year; and when I get bigger I'll help your father do anything he wants done."

Austin agreed to do this, but added: "You know your father never thinks about crops. Maybe if father would tell him he'd go partners and set a lot more traps, he'd be more willing to stay."

"No, don't do that; father has enough traps. I'd rather he would raise more corn.

"Austin, I'm learning to write a little bit, and if we go to Indiana I'll write you a letter and tell you about things over there. I'll give it to somebody passing and ask him to give it to somebody else and some time you would come across the man that had the letter and he would give

it to you. I wish you would learn to read and write. You know how I learned, don't you?"

"Yes," Austin replied.

"Let's drive some stobs in the ground and tie a hen, a cat and a dog to them, and I'll teach you just like Mrs. Hodgen taught me."

Austin agreed, and the next day Abe opened school, but it was slow work because Austin couldn't fix his mind upon his studies.

"Abe was very patient," said Mr. Golalaher, "though he got mad two or three times, and I said, 'Abe, you are mad at me.' He apologized by saying he had been told that school-teachers had to pretend they were mad sometimes to make the children learn, and he was just acting that way to see if I'd pay more attention.

"After a time I did learn to spell hen, cat and dog, and could write these words pretty well. Abe seemed very happy over my progress, and said, with as much en-

thusiasm as he ever displayed, 'Now, Austin, if we do go to Indi—Indiana, I'll write to you about a cat, a dog and a hen, and I know you can read that much of my letter.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

A FIGHT AND A STRANGER

"Abe had his likes and dislikes," said Mr. Gollaher, "and while always sympathetic and loving, he was not what might be called a 'goody-goody' boy. He never cringed though he often cried, and met every situation with a heart as strong as God ever put in human breast. He was a man through and through.

"Abe's resentments were mild, but positive. I have often seen him, in the most unconcerned way, make older boys 'show the white feather.' Once, at a picnic, a young man spoke rudely to my mother because she reproved him for grabbing a lot of fried chicken from a tin pan. Abe took up the matter:

" 'You mustn't talk that way to Mrs.

Gollaher ; she's too good to everybody to have a big buck like you talk mean to her.'

" 'What are you going to do about it ?'

asked the young man.

" 'Well,' said Abe, 'I haven't made up my mind what I'll do about it, but there are a good many things I could do, and I'll just show you one of them.'

" With that he jumped up like a kangaroo and wound his long arms about the boy's neck, his long legs around his body, and they rolled to the ground.

" 'Don't do that, boys,' cried mother.

" 'We are not fighting,' said the young man who had 'sassed' mother, 'are we, Abe ?'

" 'No, sir,' answered Abe, 'it's just a little friendly contest like Mr. John Hodgen holds down at the mill sometimes between boys, just to see which is the best man.'

" Both boys were now on their feet, and Abe said : ' I think you ought to tell Mrs. Gollaher you are sorry.'

"The young fellow at once stepped up to mother and said: 'Mrs. Gollaher, I acted mighty bad and I'm sorry.'

"Well, sir, that did mother lots of good and made her think even more of Abe than ever. She told Mrs. Lincoln about it that evening, and kissed Abe on the forehead and said she believed she thought as much of him as she did of her own children.

"Then I said: 'Mother, you tell me not to fight, and you are kissing Abe because he did fight.'

"'No,' said mother, 'Abe wasn't fighting, and besides he had a right to make the boy behave. Abe never picks a quarrel—he tries to stay out of them. If we were to encourage you, Austin, you would be fighting all of the time.'"

One day on the way to Knob Creek school, of which Abe was so proud, and of which he often told his friends after he became president, he was accosted by a man who said he wanted to buy Honey.

Abe wouldn't listen to such a thing and told the man positively Honey wasn't for sale, at any price. Something about the stranger was not pleasing to Abe. His face was ugly and hard, and Abe told Austin the man reminded him of the rotten trunk of a small tree down on Knob Creek.

"The stranger had a crippled hand," said Mr. Gollaher, "only one finger, and the arm was twisted and bent. The man inquired about the cattle and sheep, especially the sheep in the community; said he was selling a remedy that would make the wool on a sheep grow twice as fast, and that would make a cow give twice as much milk. When Abe returned home that evening he told his mother of meeting the stranger and added that he didn't like the man's face, and thought the people had better be on the lookout, for he might be crazy and poison a lot of sheep and cows.

"Four or five days later John Hodgen

found the carcasses of three of his best sheep way over there in the woods, two miles from home. They had been skinned and the skins taken; no doubt slaughtered for the skins. The same thing happened a few days later to several of Mr. Pottinger's sheep, over in Nelson County.

"Of course, there was much excitement, and the whole neighborhood was aroused. Mr. Pottinger found a trail of blood leading through a dense woods, and followed it until it was lost, but still kept up the hunt for the culprit, remaining in the woods two days and two nights. On the third night he came upon two men skinning a big sheep belonging to my grandfather. Mr. Pottinger didn't try to arrest the men, but raised his rifle and shot the largest one through the breast. The smaller man escaped. Everybody in the neighborhood went to my grandfather's farm the next day to view the remains of the culprit. As soon as Abe saw the man's crippled arm and hand he said: 'Honey

was right; his hair wouldn't have bristled and he wouldn't have growled so if he hadn't known that was a bad man.

"'What do you think about Mr. Pottinger killing the man?' I asked excitedly. 'I'm glad of it, because he might have killed some of us.'

"'Well,' said Abe, 'I don't care much myself. I'm just sorry that the man was a thief. I reckon he's better off, and I know the people around here are. I hope he didn't have any little children who are looking for him to come home.'

"Indeed, Abraham Lincoln, the child, had much of the human in him," continued Mr. Gollaher. "When he stood there looking down upon the body of the stranger he was perhaps the coolest one in the crowd. He knew the man should have been killed. The slaughter of the sheep just for their hides was enough for Abe. He had no sympathy to waste—he was just sorry the man was a thief. That was all."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

FOR THE BEST

THE children of the frontiersman who lived in the little cabins on the hills or the larger ones in the valleys, were happy youngsters, because they were so close to the world as God made it; wearing coats of buckskin, moccasins of calfskin and caps of coonskins, they faced joyously the winter's cold, breathing the purity of frozen fields and woods; and in summer, in flimsy aprons or long-tailed shirts, they sought the beauties of the silent hills; they loved the music of the mountain stream, the singing of the birds, and the whisper of the wind among the trees. They knew little of the world beyond, and were happy in the velvet gloom of the forest.

"Abraham," said Mrs. Lincoln one morning, "we are going to Mr. Hodgen's grove to-morrow to hear the Bible read, and I want you and Austin to listen closely. And you must fix up and try to keep clean. Many children will be there and I want their mothers to point to you as good examples for their boys."

The great host of people, gathered in the grove, spread a feast under the trees at noon, and everybody was enjoying it until Austin got a fish-bone in his throat. "There was considerable excitement," said Mr. Gollaher, "until Mr. Enlow ran his big fingers down my throat and pulled the bone out."

A little son of Joel Walters was there with a goat hitched to a cart. Abe and Austin were greatly interested, though they listened strictly to the reading. But as soon as the benediction was pronounced they turned their attention to the outfit.

John Hodgen watched the boys for a

moment, smiling, and then called them over to his workshop and presented Abe with a cart. "I just finished it to-day," he said, "and I have given it to you, Abe, because you have the goat; but you understand that Austin is to use it whenever he wants to. You are partners in nearly everything, and I want you to be partners in this, too."

"Austin can have the goat and cart any time he wants them," assured Abe, "and we will always play with them together, because I don't want to drive the goat unless Austin is with me."

"And that's not all; go tell Missus Sarah to come here." When she came, smiling, Mr. Hodgen said: "Mother, where's that set of harness you made for Abe's billy-goat?"

"Well, our joy was complete, never were boys happier and I was just as interested in that cart and harness as if they were mine," said Mr. Gollaher, "because I knew Abe would always divide up with

me. They were wonderful presents," he continued; "the backwoods boy's highest ambition was to own such a team."

"I wonder what Mr. and Mrs. Hodgen are talking about," said Austin; "they've been over there ever since they gave you the harness and cart. See, they are motioning to us;" and both boys started off at a trot.

"Austin," began Mr. Hodgen, "next spring I want you to help me at the mill; I have talked to your father and he is willing. Of course I'll pay you for your work."

Abe's head dropped, and he turned to leave. Then Missus Sarah threw her arms about him and pulled his big sad face up close to her own.

"Now, my boy, I want to talk to you. I want to tell you something, and I don't want you to be heartbroken; I want you to be the big, wonderful manly boy that you always are. You won't be with us next spring, or you know Mr. John would

have given you a place in his mill, too. Mr. John told Austin about the place while you were here because he knew you would be glad for Austin. Your father has finally decided to move to Indiana before winter sets in; to start about the first of November."

The tears were now gushing from Abe's eyes, and his sobs were pathetic, but he only said: "I don't want to go."

"Abraham," said the good little woman, "I didn't want to tell you to-day, but your mother insisted on it. Don't cry any more, please, but make up your mind the move is for the best, and don't let your mother know how bad you feel. You can come back to see us some time, and, if you are good young men you and Austin can take Mr. John's mill and run it."

Abe promised, but he said: "Missus Sarah, I don't reckon I will ever come back."

And on the way home, the tears still glistening in his eyes, he said: "Mother,

it may be good for all of us in Indiana. We may settle close to some school, and after I have done my day's work, maybe father will let me borrow some books from the teacher, and I will read and learn something by the pine-knot fire at night."

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE LAST OF BILLY

NEAR the Lincoln and Gollaher houses, upon a hill, stood a tall elm, spread like a big umbrella. Near its trunk circled the ridge-road, winding on to Hodgen's Mill, thence to Elizabethtown and on to the Ohio River, where some enterprising "Hoosiers" plied a fleet of flat boats for those Kentuckians who wanted to cross over and continue their journey through southern Indiana hills until the trail dipped into wide thoroughfares leading to the big cities of the East.

The old elm tree, when its foliage was full, offered shelter to the wayfarers. It had become so popular that some thoughtful pioneer had placed smooth maple logs around its trunk—an inviting seat for

weary travelers. The tree stood in the center of the hill, welcoming all who passed that way. To the north the hill dropped rather suddenly toward Knob Creek, to the south it sloped gently to the valley.

Austin thought no better place could have been selected to introduce the goat to the cart and harness than the top of Elm Tree Hill, and against Abe's better judgment, it was there they made the trial—to see just what Billy would do when "hooked up." It took only a few minutes for him to show them what he would do. He bowed his neck, tucked his head, bellowed a loud protest, and with a high leap went over the hill, rolling like a ball to Knob Creek below. To the lads on the hill it looked like an irreparable accident.

"Austin," said Abe, "we were not careful enough. I knew this wasn't the place to hitch Billy to the cart. A goat is like a mule; he's just as apt to go one way as the other."

“Well,” said Austin, “I don’t believe anything was hurt much; look at him standing down there with his nose in the water.”

“Funny, wasn’t it?” remarked Abe, after a careful examination of the outfit. “Nothing much hurt, but the next time we won’t choose the top of a hill. I once heard father say he’d never take a mule to the top of a hill, that there was no telling when he would take a fool notion to back off. Why, it was right up here somewhere, close to this hill, that Mr. McDougal’s mule backed over a ledge, when the family was passing through this part of the country, and killed their youngest child. Mrs. McDougal was so heartbroken she wouldn’t go any farther, and that’s how they happened to locate here. Mother remembers all about it, and she says God has lots of strange ways of changing people’s plans. So to-morrow we’ll try to break Billy in the corn-field.”

But the boys had another mission on

Elm Tree Hill. They had been directed to keep a lookout for a preacher who had sent word he was coming to begin the preliminary work of conducting a camp-meeting in the Church of Maple Trees, and the boys sought the shelter of the tree to keep their vigil. Abe was unusually reticent; his sad eyes were fairly devouring the hills and valleys as the September haze hung low over the tree-tops.

"I wish that preacher would hurry up if he's coming," said Abe impatiently. "I don't want to stay up here any longer; I'm tired and I feel like there's a big rock in my breast. I don't want to go to Indiana; I don't want to leave you; I don't want to leave this Hill and Knob Creek; I don't want to leave Mr. and Mrs. Hodgen, and your mother and father and little sister and brother; I want to stay here and work in Mr. Hodgen's mill next spring. I think about it all the time," Abe continued pathetically, "and last night I dreamed about it. I dreamed we

were there, and we had no water, and we were all thirsty, and mother fell sick and was begging for water, and I tried to come back to the spring there by our house, but I couldn't cross the Ohio River; and when I got back home sister told me an angel had come and had taken mother to Heaven, where they had water upon every hill in dippers of gold."

Austin was amazed at Abe's dream and asked: "Why didn't you take your mother a drink from the Ohio River?"

"Because," Abe solemnly answered, "the water was muddy, and big ugly catfish were swimming around in it. Then I got wide awake and didn't go to sleep any more, and before the sun was up Honey and I went to the spring for a bucket of water."

Abe and Austin watched for the preacher until twilight; then the two heart-sore boys started home to report his failure to appear. Billy followed, and Austin pulled the cart.

"Austin," said Abe, "I don't see why Billy couldn't have pulled the cart like you are pulling it."

"I don't either," said Austin, "except that Billy ain't as old as I am, and goats don't have as much sense as people, anyhow." To which Abe very solemnly replied that he didn't believe the goat would ever be as smart as Austin.

Bright and early the next morning the boys went to the corn-field and after many attempts finally got Billy harnessed to the cart and were ready for the second test. Billy reared and fell backward. He butted and bowed and belowed, then laid down.

"Let him rest a while," suggested Austin, "and when he gets up maybe he'll take a notion to go."

And he did. He went like a whirlwind, jumping and butting, Abe holding to one line and Austin the other, but giving Billy all the freedom he needed. He circled the field and tried to climb the rail fence, but

the boys pulled him back. They gave him more rein and he scooted away, the boys holding him within the limit of their speed. At the end of the field, Billy stopped suddenly, then plunged high into the air and fell to his destruction upon the sharp stub of a sapling.

Both boys were stricken with grief, but Abe gathered his wits quickly and said: "It couldn't be helped. Billy did it himself. There is no need to cry, Austin. We'll come down here after dinner and bury Billy. I tried to be good to him, but he never seemed to like me much. You can have the cart and harness when I go to Indiana, and maybe you'll get a goat sometime, and can break him before he gets too old to learn. I won't have time any more for goats. Father says I am a pretty good chopper and will be a great help to him in clearing the land."

CHAPTER XL

THE END OF PLAYTIME

THE first tinge of frost came with the closing days of September—a sign that the winter would be late. Thomas Lincoln had never known this sign to fail, and he was well pleased, for he hoped to get comfortably settled in his Indiana home before the severe weather set in. His preparations were going forward so slowly, however, that Mrs. Lincoln was becoming much disturbed. The horrors of that February blizzard in 1809 were still fresh in her memory and she was afraid a like disaster might overtake them if they did not reach Indiana before the winter began.

With the exception of gathering a little bacon here and grinding a little corn

there, Mr. Lincoln had done nothing in preparation for the journey. And he could do nothing until he procured a horse or mule to hitch to the old spring wagon he managed to pick up at Elizabethtown. That was his chief trouble. He had no money and his only chance to get a work animal was to swap pelts, corn and tobacco for it. He had tried to make such a trade, but in vain, because the settlers who owned horses and mules needed them.

Down at the mill Mr. Lincoln was telling his troubles to Mr. Hodgen; but the miller was entirely out of sympathy with the Indiana project, and had often, and heatedly, advised against the move.

“Thomas,” said Mr. Hodgen, “I am much interested in you and your family, and I want to see them comfortable. Now, since I know your mind is finally made up, and nothing short of your own death could change it, I am going to make a proposition to you. You can’t make that trip with one horse. Your wagon is

too heavy. Your family can't walk, so you must not start with one animal. Now, if you can manage to trade for Jonathan Keith's mule, or any other, I will make Abraham a present of old Fanny. The mare is old but in good condition, and would help pull you out of many a mud-hole between here and your journey's end."

Mr. Lincoln was most grateful for this unexpected kindness, and promised to get the mule from Mr. Keith, or one just as good. On his way home that afternoon, walking with Abe and Austin, he lifted up his head and thanked God for the goodness of John Hodgen.

But Abe said: "Father, you'd better wait until you get the mule, because if you don't get it you can't get old Fanny, and I've heard Mr. Keith say lots of times he wouldn't take anything for that mule."

"Maybe he won't, but he ought to," replied Mr. Lincoln, "because if it hadn't been for us Jonathan Keith wouldn't be

here. He was nearly dead that day we found him over on the Rolling Fork propped against a tree."

"Abe was right," said Mr. Gollaher, "Mr. Keith would not hear of such a thing. Then Mr. Lincoln began to search in earnest and one evening he came home leading a horse that was a sight to behold. Besides being old and thin, it had a twisted foot. Mr. Lincoln had traded a few pelts for it. My father declared he wouldn't give his oldest coonskin cap for the animal, but Mr. Hodgen said he would keep his promise on one condition: 'Feed the horse well for four weeks, then I will examine him, and if I feel that it will be safe for you to start on the journey, I will hand old Fanny over to you, as Abe's property.' And Mr. Lincoln accepted the condition. He thought of nothing now except going to Indiana, and spent practically all of his time looking after the horse. He rubbed it forty times a day and fed it everything he could get

it to eat. It was surprising," laughed Mr. Gollaher, "how that old plug felt his oats; he actually tried to rear up one day; then I said, 'Abe, you'll be moving pretty soon.' My father made one more appeal to Mr. Lincoln to wait until spring, but he just shook his head and said, 'I'm going.'

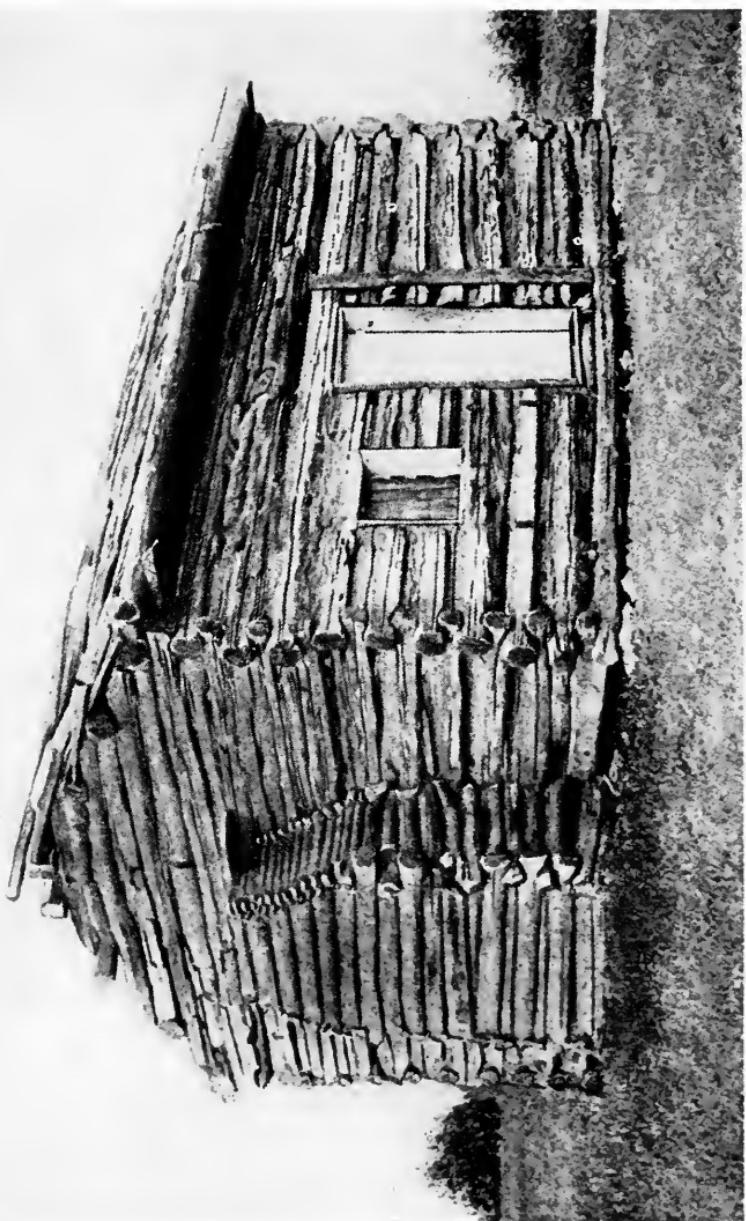
"Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah didn't mention Indiana when they could avoid it, and Abe was as silent as the grave. There was gloom in the little cabin, and all of us felt mighty sorry for the Lincolns," concluded Mr. Gollaher. He was silent for a moment, then went on:

"Out there on the bank of South Fork —close to Cave Spring Farm, in the old cemetery, an infant brother of Abe is buried; his name was Thomas Lincoln, Junior. In recent years we have tried to find the grave, but we never could. Mrs. Lincoln wanted to be buried there; that was one of the reasons she didn't want to settle in Indiana. A few days before they left, my mother, Sarah, Abe and myself

went with her to say good-by to the grave of her baby. We went in their old spring wagon, pulled by Mr. Keith's mule and one of my father's. Mrs. Lincoln covered the grave with wild flowers and vines we had gathered along the way. Then we all kneeled down there on the hillside and my mother prayed while Mrs. Lincoln said good-by to the little mound under the sheltering trees. On the way back we stopped at the Old Cave Spring to get a drink of that good water; and we climbed the hill to the cabin in which Abe was born, that his mother might look on it once again before she left."

Abe's playtime in the hills had ended; his heart was heavy when he went among them, and he would often weep as he sat upon their moss-covered rocks. His sadness deepened and he said little when with Austin, except to beg him to learn to read and write.

"I, too, was sorrowful," said Mr. Gollaher; "indeed, I nearly broke down. I



Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln

looked upon his departure with dread. My love for him, which came suddenly into my heart when I was trying to teach him to ride a stick-horse out there on the Cave Spring Farm, was past the understanding of even my own people.

"One day he said to me: 'Austin, did you ever hear them tell about how a poor fellow feels the day before he is to be hung? Well, that's the way I feel, only worse. I'm always going to be sad,' he went on, 'but I'm going to try to learn something, and if I do, I am going to teach other little boys to read and write. We won't be together much longer, Austin, and we can't hear from each other; so I'll tell you what we will do. Every morning when the sun comes up, and every evening when it goes down, you think of me and I'll think of you. You know Mrs. McDougal said she promised her mother to do that when she came here, and she has kept it up ever since. We will just do that,' said Abe slowly, 'and I will

know you are thinking of me and you will know I am thinking of you—when the sun comes up and when the sun goes down.’”

Mr. Gollaher says he kept this up for a long time, and thought of Abe with all his strength, and he believed Abe did the same thing.

“But I reckon he finally quit, because when he grew older he had many important things to do, among them that of being president of the United States,” and the old man wagged his head and chuckled.

“A million times since he left here I have seen him in these hills with Honey,” the old fellow said. “Why, just the other day I went down to Knob Creek—down by the Nice Stone, and there I saw Abe—the boy—with that sad strange expression upon his face, and I whispered, ‘Abe, you went out into the world on an errand for God, and now you’ve come back to play with me. Call Honey and we will go out in the woods and pester the squirrels,’ ”

but just then I heard the dinner horn and I tottered back to the house where I have lived for nearly a century—lived and thought of Abe, and thanked God that He honored me by letting me be Abe's playmate."

CHAPTER XLI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THE November sun came up over the hills bigger and brighter than usual that morning as if to cast its glints of gold in the path of the Lincolns as they traveled the road to Indiana.

The spring wagon to which the two old horses were hitched, stood in front of the Lincoln cabin. The cow, securely haltered, with Abe and Austin at its head, was ready to follow the wagon over the road to Hodgen's Mill, and on to Middle Creek.

Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah said good-by to the Gollahers; Abe had received his last hug from Austin's mother, and all the little Gollaher children had hugged and kissed him. Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah

were seated on a bed of straw in the front of the wagon, and all were ready for the departure.

Mr. Gollaher and Austin were going along as far as Middle Creek, to help with the cow, which was a little unruly, greatly to Austin's delight. With much waving of hands, but in silence, the journey was begun. The tears were rolling down Mrs. Lincoln's cheeks, and Sarah was wiping her eyes with her apron. Thomas Lincoln and Thomas Gollaher were in the lead. Side by side they walked and talked of their plans.

On top of the hill—Elm Tree Hill—Abe glanced back for a moment at the cabin home, now deserted, then turned his eyes resolutely to the red clay road that stretched ahead of him and moved along with the free swing of the native backwoodsman.

They stopped at Hodgen's Mill, where Mr. John and Missus Sarah were waiting for them, with a basket of food for the

journey. Abe and Austin looked around the old familiar mill. Austin cried a little, but Abe touched him gently with the palm of his hand as he said: "Maybe it's best for us to go. I may come back some time, and then we'll run the mill for Mr. John."

Mrs. Hodgen said good-by with tears in her eyes—those great kind eyes that always sought out the ways of goodness and ever looked with love on Abraham. She hugged him close and said:

"May God bless you, my boy, and direct you in paths of righteousness. I feel that you have some wonderful duties before you, and I know you will meet them well."

"Good-by, Tom: take good care of Mrs. Lincoln and the children—and old Fanny," said John Hodgen. Then he slipped a small gold piece into Abe's hand, saying: "Buy a book with it, son."

The cow stopped to drink down at the ford below the gum-spring. The boys

looked up-stream toward the old mill where they had spent so many happy days. Austin's eyes were filled with tears, but Abe did not cry. He was resigned to the inevitable at last, and so turned his eyes with grim determination to the task before him.

They reached Middle Creek about noon and had lunch before the final parting. But Abe could not eat; that heavy "rock" in his breast, of which he so often complained, was now heavier than ever.

"Abraham," pleaded his mother, "for my sake you must eat. You must keep up your strength. I will need you greatly when we are settled. You are a man, my son," she continued, "although in years you are still a child."

"Abe obeyed his mother," said Mr. Gollaher, "but he choked the food down just to please her."

"Good-by, folks," said Thomas Gollaher; "take care of them, Tom, and God bless all of you."

"Good-by, Austin," said Abe simply, and the two boys wound their arms around each other. Then Abe broke away and led the cow across the stream, Honey following.

"I watched them as they ascended the hill," said Mr. Gollaher, "the wagon in front, Abe and Honey and the cow behind; I watched Abe—I watched him till the highest peak of his coonskin cap ducked below the hills, and then I fell upon my father's neck and sobbed."

THE END

